Event Venue Sustainability Requirements & Preferences

BACKGROUND
SPLC strives to utilize superior sustainability practices at its events. This document outlines SPLC’s requirements and preferences for the sustainable operation of the venues it contracts for events. It is not SPLC’s expectation that every venue will be able to meet every criteria outlined below. Rather, the purpose of this document is to establish clear expectations and agreements between SPLC and the venue operator as to which of these criteria will be included as part of the venue rental contract.

The criteria in this document draws on SPLC member input, online resources, and standards, such as the ASTM E2773 Standard Specification for the Evaluation and Selection of Food and Beverage for Environmentally Sustainable Meetings, Events, Trade Shows, and Conferences. The criteria have been selected and prioritized for the impact they have on the environment and society. As it may not be obvious in some cases why we have prioritized a criteria, a rationale has been provided.

REQUIREMENTS
These criteria are of utmost importance and are likely to be “deal breakers” for SPLC if they cannot be met.

- Venue operator shall provide a point of contact responsible for assisting SPLC in increasing the sustainability of its event.

- The venue operator shall provide food service options that are capable of satisfying a large number of SPLC’s Food & Beverage Requirements and Preferences, or, permit SPLC to use a food service provider of its choice.
  *Rationale: Food service is one of the highest impact aspects of putting on an event because of the energy and resources consumed as part of producing and preparing the food, and because the associated setup, cleaning and waste handling are labor, energy and resource intensive.*

- The venue operator shall annually measure and track their carbon emissions associated with operations (for example, fuel used for onsite energy generation, in forklifts, landscaping vehicles etc.) in addition to total energy use, using available online tools or through professional assessment.
  *Rationale: After food service, the impacts associated with the energy required to run a meeting facility are significant. No credible effort to manage or mitigate these impacts can be undertaken without measuring the scale of the energy use and related impacts.*

- The venue operator shall have in place a waste reduction program that includes:
  - operating procedures that promote the efficient use of materials (including working with event planners to avoid waste),
  - procurement practices that prevent waste upfront,
  - a surplus/donation program that repurposes materials, and
- Recycling and compost collection receptacles and procedures that divert recoverable materials from the landfill.

The venue operator shall report to SPLC the diversion rate achieved using this program for the entire facility over the course of the previous 12 months.

- The venue operator shall communicate to SPLC, within 30 days of the end of the event, the event-specific waste diversion rate. When multiple events are being held, the venue operator shall implement a tracking system that allows for differentiation and attribution of waste to individual events. The report should record the weight of materials disposed both in front and back of house as part of putting on the event, and break-out the weight of materials sent to recycling, compost, surplus/donation, landfill/incineration or hazardous waste. This should include food waste, unless the venue’s caterer provides food waste auditing.

  Rationale: SPLC’s goal is to produce zero-waste events. Our ability to improve our performance from one event to the next depends on accurate measurement of each event’s diversion rate.

- The venue operator shall ensure that sufficient bins for collecting recyclables and compostables are provided in service areas. If the venue operator uses commingled collection of recyclables, bins will be clearly labeled with the materials that can be deposited. If recyclables are diverted from the waste stream through a back-of-house sorting program, that shall be clearly communicated on all waste bins, including a listing of the materials that will be sorted out for recycling.

  Rationale: The inability to find appropriate receptacles to dispense of items appropriately can lead our attendees to carry their trash around, complain, or both. Similarly, back-of-house sorting programs can generate significant agitation for eco-conscious attendees when the details of the sorting program are not communicated clearly.

- The venue operator shall use and document integrated pest management practices.

- The venue operator shall enforce local no-idling ordinances. In the absence of an ordinance, the venue operator shall restrict idling to less than 5 minutes unless severe weather conditions exist (to be determined by the venue operator).

- The venue operator shall develop a plan that can be shared with stakeholders, for annual water reduction with specified objectives and reduction metrics associated with each objective.

- The supplier shall attest that all workers involved in SPLC’s event will be paid at or above the “1 Adult” hourly living wage estimated by MIT's Living Wage Calculator for the event’s locale.

  Rationale: Compensation that is inadequate to sustain a worker’s life in the locale of employment is, by definition, not sustainable. SPLC believes that workers should absolutely be paid sufficiently to afford a basic quality of life in the locale of employment. The “1 Adult” wage standard is quite low. Unfortunately, service sector wages, on average, are so depressed that we don’t believe we can make a higher level a “deal breaker” requirement at this time.
• The venue operator shall have in place a program for promoting and tracking the use of
diverse suppliers (minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses,
disability-owned businesses and veteran-owned businesses). No later than 30 days
before the event, the venue operator shall provide SPLC with the percentage of the
venue’s annual goods and services spending that goes to diverse suppliers.

• The venue operator shall have in place a program for promoting and tracking the use of
small and medium sized enterprises (SME) as suppliers. No later than 30 days before
the event, the venue operator shall provide SPLC with the percentage of the venue’s
annual goods and services spending that goes to diverse suppliers.

PREFERENCES
These criteria are highly desired by SPLC and therefore represent an opportunity for venue
operators to distinguish themselves.

• The venue operator shall have a written sustainability plan, available for stakeholder
review. The plan should document the operator’s sustainability vision, objectives and
performance goals. The venue operator’s sustainability plan shall have General
Manager or executive support as indicated by a signed statement.

  Rationale: This is only a preference because SPLC recognizes that it is possible for a venue to
  achieve high performance from a sustainability perspective without using this process.

• The venue operator shall attest that all workers involved in SPLC’s event will be paid at
or above the “1 Adult, 1 Child” hourly living wage estimated by MIT’s Living Wage
Calculator for the event’s locale.

  Rationale: Compensation that is inadequate to sustain a worker’s life in the locale of employment
  is, by definition, not sustainable. SPLC believes that workers should absolutely be paid sufficiently
to afford a basic quality of life in the locale of employment. A basic quality of life includes the
  opportunity to provide for an offspring.

• The venue operator shall purchase or generate clean, renewable electricity for its
operations. The venue operator shall report to SPLC the percentage of its total
electricity use obtained from these sources.

• The venue operator shall have attained or have registered to pursue third party
certifications, such as LEED or ENERGY STAR, attesting to the environmental
performance of its operations.

• The venue operator shall use green certified (for example, Green Seal, Eco-Logo,
Design for the Environment, or comparable) cleaning products, excepting food
safety/sanitation products required by health codes. The venue operator shall report to
SPLC the percentage of its total cleaning products purchase that is so certified.

  Rationale: impacts on water, sewage, worker exposure, indoor air quality,
• The venue operator shall recycle the following electronic equipment with an e-Stewards certified company: computers and peripherals, printer cartridges, cellular telephones, televisions, appliances, and cameras.
  
  Rationale: Electronics represent a growing and special category of waste. Because of the hazardous materials and valuable minerals present in electronics it is particularly important that this waste be recycled using safe and clean processes that isolate harmful elements while recovering valuable resources. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of electronics are recycled.

• The venue operator shall have policies that reduce wasteful energy use during move-in/move-out, such as:
  
  o a 50% reduced light protocol.
  o a reduced HVAC protocol.
  o a policy of limited escalator operation.

• The venue operator shall not use motorized equipment and vehicles powered by internal combustion engines anywhere inside its facility at any time except in garages, in front of loading docks, in the load-in and load-out of vehicles used for exhibit display purposes, or in case of emergencies.

• The venue operator shall promote and provide information regarding alternative transportation to planners and others.

• The venue operator landscaping shall incorporate native plant selection. The venue operator shall indicate what percentage of plants is native to the area.

• The venue shall have permanent rapid refill stations for reusable water bottles.
  
  Rationale: See http://web.multco.us/sustainability/rethinking-bottled-water.

• The venue operator shall provide incentives for employees for using lower carbon intense transportation such as providing free bus passes, public transportation or preferred parking for hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles.

**NICE TO HAVES**

These criteria represent areas that have been identified by some as best practices, but are not high priority to SPLC, generally because their impact-reduction potential is minimal or they are overly prescriptive.

• The venue operator shall distribute materials such as contracts, sales kits, banquet event orders, and event specification guides electronically unless a paper copy is requested.

• The venue operator shall make bike racks available to employees and visitors.

• The venue operator shall have a “power down” policy between established hours, thus requiring exhibitors and production teams to pay additional rent if 24-hour power is
required.

- The venue operator shall have a policy regarding snow and ice removal from its property that limits the application of de-icers and salts.

- The venue operator irrigation systems shall have rain gauge meters.

- The venue operator shall capture and re-use water run-off.