Event Food & Beverage Sustainability Requirements & Preferences

BACKGROUND
SPLC strives to utilize superior sustainability practices at its events. This document outlines SPLC's requirements and preferences for food and beverage service. It is not SPLC’s expectation that every supplier 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 supplier as to which of these criteria will be included as part of the food service contract for a given event.

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.

- The supplier shall provide SPLC with menus, service and portion options that minimize food waste in the front of house.
  
  Rationale: 40% of the food grown in the US is discarded without being eaten. This means that all the resources that went into growing, refrigerating, processing, cooking, and serving that 40% was also wasted. Minimizing food waste at every step is one of the most important things a foodservice operation can do to reduce its impact. Of those steps, reducing plate waste is top priority because food that has made it all the way to being served has received the most input of energy, water, labor, etc. On average, 17% of plated food is not eaten.

- The supplier shall have in place waste audit procedures or software (such as LeanPath) to reduce pre-consumer food waste.
  
  Rationale: Food service operations that have implemented strong waste auditing practices or software have reported pre-consumer food waste reduction as high as 43%.

- The supplier shall provide SPLC with menu options that minimize the use of animal-derived ingredients, especially beef.
  
  Rationale: Animal-derived ingredients, such as meat and dairy, contribute a disproportionately large share of the impacts associated with food. SPLC wishes to minimize the use of these ingredients across all food served, not just in vegan or vegetarian options. Cheese, pork, farmed salmon and turkey are at the high impact end of the scale, but beef stands out with double the impact of those.

- The supplier shall provide SPLC with breakfast, snack, dessert, and drink options that have little added sugar.
  
  ○ Rationale: A substantial increase in sugar consumption since the early 1980s has been identified as a significant driver – around the world – of rapidly growing incidence rates for heart disease,
type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. It has even been shown to accelerate tumor growth in some cancers, including breast cancer. These diseases undermine quality of life for many people and are a major threat to the economic stability of families, employers, and governments, due to associated medical expenses. Because sugar is also highly addictive and undermines attentiveness, SPLC chooses to not serve its event attendees sugary foods or beverages.

- The supplier shall provide SPLC with seafood options that are Green or Yellow rated by the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch List and/or are Marine Stewardship Council certified, if the supplier is already chain-of-custody certified by Marine Stewardship Council.
  
  Rationale: Sustainably managed fisheries are essential to the world’s food security, as well as to many ecosystem services. SPLC wishes to never support through its purchasing unsustainable seafood harvesting. (more information)

- The supplier shall have in place energy, water and waste reduction initiatives in the back of house.
  
  Rationale: After minimizing food waste and reducing animal-derived ingredients, the next greatest opportunity to reduce the impact of food service is in improving the efficiency of the refrigeration, cooking, cleaning and lighting equipment and practices. Initiatives to divert waste, such as ingredient packaging or produce trimmings, from the landfill or incinerator should be part of a comprehensive resource conservation plan.

- The supplier shall ensure that water and tea are not pre-poured into glasses on the table at seated lunches and dinners, nor is ice put into them. Tables will instead be supplied with water and tea pitchers without ice in them. Attendees must request ice if they want it.
  
  Rationale: Many people only want water or tea, not both. This means one or the other goes to waste, along with the ice in the glass. Freezing ice is a very energy intensive process.

- The supplier shall ensure that sufficient bins for collecting recyclables and compostables are provided in service areas.
  
  Rationale: The inability to find appropriate receptacles to dispense of served items with a clean conscience can lead our attendees to carry their trash around, complain, or both.

- The supplier shall serve no bottled water.
  
  Rationale: See http://web.multco.us/sustainability/rethinking-bottled-water.

- 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, food services 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 supplier shall serve only 100% certified Fair Trade coffee and tea. (Fair Trade certified coffees that are also certified as shade-grown or bird friendly are even better.)
Rationale: The Council wishes to support through its purchasing power Fair Trade coffee and tea production because of the numerous benefits that fair trade certification programs produce for the producers, their communities and the planet.

- The supplier shall provide reusable utensils, napkins, tables coverings, serving ware, plates, bowls, and cups (as appropriate for the menu) at all meals and breaks. This includes stirrers for coffee and tea.
  Rationale: It is not always the case that reusable serviceware has a lower impact than disposable or compostables (because of the significant energy and water involved in the manufacture and cleaning of reusables). However, reusables fit the polished feel we want our events to have.

- The supplier shall provide visible communication informing venue staff and visitors of the practices that meet these sustainability requirements and preferences.
  Rationale: Our audience wants to know that SPLC money is being spent with suppliers that are good stewards. If the stewardship isn’t visible, it will often be assumed that it isn’t happening.

- The supplier shall label food on buffets and in menus for those with food allergies (and also to showcase the sustainable menu items).
  Rationale: We want our attendees to be able to identify food that sustains them.

- In the unlikely event that a rigid, waterproof single-use service container is required, the supplier shall use polyactic acid (PLA) containers made from renewable resources such as corn, tapioca, or sugarcane or PLA-lined fiber containers. Recycled, unwaxed paperboard boxes shall be used in cases where waterproofness is not a requirement (e.g. boxed lunch boxes).
  Rationale: A robust lifecycle analysis of rigid, waterproof single-use container options (PLA, PET, Styrofoam) found that PLA had the lowest lifecycle impacts in nearly every scenario. PET was the worst. Because recycling for unwaxed paperboard is more available than PLA recycling, containers made of unwaxed paperboard is preferred when waterproofness is not a requirement.

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

- 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 supplier shall track and report to SPLC all waste generated as part of the food service operation and the proportions that were diverted to recycling and compost vs landfilled/incinerated. A diversion rate >80% is desired.
  Rationale: We would like to be able to report to our attendees the diversion rate for our event.
• The supplier shall donate leftover food to the local community or nonprofit organizations to the extent allowable by local health codes.

• The supplier shall purchase or generate clean, renewable electricity for its operations.

• The supplier 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 supplier shall report to SPLC the percentage of its total cleaning products purchase that is so certified.

• The supplier shall source a minimum of 25% of total foods that are organic or local (within 250 miles).

• The supplier shall provide fruit and vegetable options that are organic and/or locally grown seasonal choices.

• The supplier shall provide local and/or organic wines and beers.

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.

• The supplier shall use paper made with post-consumer recycled content for menus and signage.

• The supplier shall only use garnishes, centerpieces, and decorations that can be eaten, donated, recycled, reused, planted, or composted.

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