



## **ACI-NA Sustainable Conferences Guidelines**

### **Message from ACI-NA Leadership**

Almost seventy years ago, in 1948, 19 airports joined together to form an organization called the Airport Operators Council to address and solve mutual problems faced by the airport industry. That organization endures, although with a new name. Today the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA) has over 350 airports and 380 associate members, and although our industry has seen tremendous change and growth since that time, our main purpose has not waived.

ACI-NA's mission is to "advocate policies and provide services that strengthen the ability of airports to serve their passengers, customers and communities", and to provide consistent value to the industry. One way we do this is by organizing high-quality conferences to educate members on the latest topics, and provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and best practices and significant networking opportunities. Every year we strive to put together the best conferences in the industry, and we look to our own members for inspiration.

Our airport members aim for continuous improvement in providing the best service they can to their passengers, communities, tenants and stakeholders – and they are increasingly applying the principles of sustainability to do so. Airports across the U.S. and Canada are taking into consideration the economic, operational, environmental and social impacts of their organizations. As our members increasingly adopt sustainable business practices, so too does ACI-NA – especially when it comes to organizing our events.

ACI-NA developed these Sustainable Conference Guidelines to help us continually improve our conferences to ensure they are economically robust, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible – all while providing excellent programming. These guidelines not only describe what ACI-NA has been doing for many years, but also outline additional steps we hope to take in the future as we incorporate sustainability into our operations. After all, sustainability is a marathon not a sprint - and ACI-NA hopes to still be advocating for the airport industry for the next seventy years!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin M. Burke".

**Kevin Burke**  
**President and CEO**

## **I. Introduction**

Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword in the airport industry – it’s an established way of doing business that can improve an airport’s economic vitality, operational efficiency, natural resource conservation and social impact (the “EONS” definition of sustainability). As airports in the U.S. and Canada integrate sustainability into their organizations and use it as a framework for managing both day-to-day operations and long term planning, they realize significant benefits for their communities, passengers, tenants, employees and other stakeholders. ACI-NA can incorporate these same principles into our own business model with the same goals in mind – to deliver a high level of service to our members while strengthening our financial health, minimizing our environmental impact and providing benefits to our communities.

### **Why Focus on Sustainable Conferences?**

Developing conferences is a core component of ACI-NA’s business model. Our meetings deliver benefits to members through education, providing a forum for sharing ideas and best practices, and opportunities for networking. Income generated from our Annual Conference & Exhibition and specialty topic conferences each year is critical to the financial viability of the organization - accounting for approximately one third of our total budget. Developing successful conferences every year is crucial to both enhancing the value we provide to members as well as ACI-NA’s own financial health.

Not only do they provide an important source of revenue to fund the organization, conferences represent the single largest portion of ACI-NA’s overall environmental footprint compared to our other business activities. ACI-NA is a relatively lean organization, with fewer than 50 total employees in our Washington and Ottawa offices. Therefore our day-to-day environmental impacts are minor in comparison to the combined impact of our 20-plus conferences per year, with approximately 4,800 total attendees in fiscal year 2016. Conducting our conferences in a more sustainable way has the potential for the greatest reduction in environmental impacts, such as waste generation and greenhouse gas emissions from travel and shipping.

The economic and social benefits for the host communities are also an important consideration for ACI-NA as we plan and develop conferences, and include: attendee travel in and out of the local airport, generating revenue for ACI-NA members; contributions to the local economy through hotel room nights, restaurant visits, taxis and ride sharing services, and local attractions. In addition, ACI-NA provides donations to a local charity selected by the host airport for our Annual Conference & Exhibition each year.

### **Purpose of the Sustainable Conferencing Guidelines**

The purpose of the ACI-NA Sustainable Conference guidelines is to provide a general overview of the key considerations for the organization as we plan, execute, review and improve our conferences and meetings with the goal of making these events more sustainable. Where practicable, ACI-NA will take steps to address our conference waste, greenhouse gas emissions,

vendor and venue relationships, charitable activities, attendee wellness, and other conference planning activities that have an environmental and social impact.

While a number of the best practices listed in these guidelines are relatively simple to implement, others take more coordination and advance planning. Therefore we recognize that it will not always be possible for ACI-NA to implement all, or even certain specific initiatives listed in these guidelines. Our ability to adopt these practices will vary somewhat depending on each conference location, venue and hotel capabilities, budget constraints, schedule and timing, and other variables.

## **Organization of the Guidelines**

The document is organized by three high-level phases of conference development: planning (both in the near and long-term), on-site management, and post-conference review and improvement. Within each phase the suggested activities are further organized by impact area. The intent is for this document to evolve over time in order incorporate new ideas, lessons learned and best practices.

These guidelines are not intended to cover every single impact area or activity, but rather focus on the main areas that ACI-NA is currently addressing or plans to address in the future. The additional green conferencing resources listed at the end of this document provide more detailed information that ACI-NA may use for reference and guidance for other topics not covered here.

## **II. PLAN**

ACI-NA selects conference locations up to three years in advance for the Annual Conference & Exhibition, and typically one year in advance for the specialty topic conferences. Depending on the specific event, the planning phase may last several years – but the most intense planning and preparation for any given event generally occurs starting one year out. It is during the planning phase that ACI-NA issues requests for proposals (RFPs) for meeting locations, selects the site, and negotiates contracts with vendors, meeting venues, hotels, caterers, suppliers, etc. This phase of the process also involves review of performance in prior conferences, attendee feedback in follow-up surveys and staff suggestions to improve future events. Below are general recommendations for this phase of the process.

### **General Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives:**

- Request as part of the RFP and/or contracting phase that suppliers, vendors, venues etc. provide ACI-NA with their environmental or sustainability policies and initiatives (for example, hotel green housekeeping initiatives, meeting venue recycling programs, charitable partnerships such as venues donating food to a food bank etc.). This should include a request for any formal sustainability reports published by the organizations and businesses (for example, reports using the Global Reporting Initiative, the Carbon

Disclosure Project, or other framework).

- Encourage hotels and conference venue to use “green” cleaning products.
- Communicate to exhibitors and vendors the importance of sustainable conferencing to ACI-NA (for example, by sharing this guidance document, the environmental and/or sustainability policies of the venue, conference designer and other resources as appropriate) and ask them to consider doing the same.
- Communicate to attendees via marketing emails the environmental and/or sustainability policies of the host airport, venues, hotels and vendors in advance of the conference highlight the topic.
- Consider highlighting hotels that have more robust environmental and/ or sustainability policies in marketing materials.
- Plan to include one (or more) conference sessions on sustainability topics as appropriate to each conference.

### **Waste Reduction / Recycling**

- Request from vendors, meeting venues, caterers, (as appropriate) to provide ACI-NA with relevant waste management data such as percent of waste recycled or total weight of recycled materials, and percent of food waste diverted from landfill (i.e. by composting, donation to food banks, etc.).
- Encourage exhibitors and vendors in advance to minimize paper collateral materials or use recycled materials and vegetable based inks. This can be accomplished by sharing these ACI-NA Sustainable Conferences Guidelines with exhibitors and vendors and including this guidance in the exhibitor/sponsor information materials.
- Circulate all agendas and conference information electronically and minimize printed materials.
- Use Forest Stewardship Council certified recycled paper for items that need to be printed and shipped in advance.
- Ship materials in reusable boxes or bins and reuse packing materials when possible.

### **Transport / Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

- Where possible, book hotels that are walking distance from the venue and make attendees aware of walking routes.

- Offer as a sponsorship opportunity the purchase of carbon offsets for travel by all conference attendees, or offer attendees the option to purchase their own travel offsets individually.
- Provide attendees with information on public transportation in host city.
- Encourage sponsors, when possible, to consider planning events that are within walking distance or accessible via public transport to the conference venue and hotels.

### **III. ON-SITE MANAGEMENT**

After at least a year of preparation, the ACI-NA team arrives on-site to the conference venue where all the careful planning pays off. After laying the ground work for a more sustainable conference in the planning phase, there are many opportunities in the week leading up to the conference and during the conference itself, to implement sustainable initiatives. These are often the most visible and engaging as they frequently involve the participation and cooperation of exhibitors, staff and attendees.

#### **Waste Reduction / Recycling**

- Do not provide plastic water bottles in conference venues – instead use pitchers and glasses or water coolers only (water bottles to be provided only upon speaker request or when there is insufficient time for venue staff to refresh water pitchers and glasses in between panels).
- Encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles and encourage exhibitors to consider reusable water bottles as conference giveaways.
- Prominent placement of recycling bins with clear signage in the conference venue and where possible place recycling bins next to trash cans to encourage recycling.
- Recycle name badges and lanyards. Prominent placement of name badge recycling boxes at conference venue. Staff to alert attendees to this option.
- Eliminate to-go cups from coffee stations. Instead use ceramic mugs and request that the conference venue provide bulk sugar and creamer in carafes instead of individual sugar/creamer packets.
- Eliminate use of one-time use plates and plastic cups at receptions where possible, and use glass/ ceramic/ reusable or recyclable plates and utensils.
- Provide attendees with electronic copies of rosters only.

- Email attendees electronic copies of agendas and associated documents to limit the number of printed items.
- Expand use of the ACI-NA conference App to larger specialty events throughout the year to help minimize need for printed materials, and communicate its availability to attendees in advance.
- Use recycled paper for items that need to be printed on site and work to minimize printing on-site.
- Organize a “pack your bags” area at the Annual Conference & Exhibition that allows attendees to select only those exhibitor materials and giveaways they want (and prohibiting the use of paper as sponsor materials for the station) to further minimize waste.

### **Transport / Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

- Provide electronic walking maps to attendees of hotels, local attractions, restaurants as well as public transportation options and availability of bike sharing or ride sharing opportunities.
- Request seasonal menus with ingredients sourced locally wherever possible, and offer vegetarian menu choices (vegetarian fare results in far less GHG emissions than meat).
- Choose set designs and decorations that can be reused where possible, and consider giving these away as table prizes if they can't be reused by the venue.

### **Social Responsibility and Wellness**

- Make donations to a local charity in place of speaker gifts.
- Request information from conference venue and caterers on availability of programs to donate unused food to local shelters or food banks.
- Organize a “fun run” for conference attendees and guests where possible.
- Facilitate opportunities for interested attendees to participate in a service project to benefit the local community or partner with a local charity to make attendees aware of volunteer opportunities.
- Create walking routes and maps for conference attendees to/from and through the conference venue.
- Request seasonal menus with ingredients sourced locally wherever possible.

## **Potential Future Exhibitor Initiatives**

- Consider creating a designated pavilion at our Annual Conference & Exhibition for sustainable products and services (earliest possible implementation date is 2019).
- Create a tab in our exhibitor service kit on how to be more sustainable for our exhibitors.
- Consider creating a “green / sustainable booth” contest for exhibitors.

## **IV. REVIEW**

After each conference, ACI-NA reviews key performance indicators. Typically these include number of attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, members vs. non-members attending, revenue, budget, etc. We also solicit economic data from the venue and host city when available so we can gauge the economic value to a community that hosts an ACI-NA event, which assists in future conference planning and marketing. The Sustainable Conferencing Guidelines also includes suggested data points for environmental and social indicators, which we hope to collect in the future for purposes of creating a conference sustainability report.

### **Data Collection**

- Collect key economic data from the host city on the impact of the Annual Conference & Exhibition (for example, revenue generated, jobs supported, etc.).
- Collect key environmental data from the Annual Conference & Exhibition venue and vendors, such as estimated savings through reduced paper use, approximate weight of recyclables collected and diverted from the landfill, approximate amount of food diverted from landfill (composted or donated), etc.
- Tons of carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions offset by sponsors, and translate that to approximate number of attendees whose CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for travel to/from the conference were offset.
- Collect information from hotels (when available), on the number of attendees opting into their environmental programs (for example, hotel “water sense” programs, where participants don’t replace towels every day).
- Amend the post-conference survey to attendees to include questions on sustainability initiatives (for example, were there enough recycling bins, did you find the electronic app useful or did you print your agenda, did you know your travel emissions were offset, etc.).

## **Waste Minimization / Recycling**

- Ship unused materials back to ACI-NA for use at future conferences where possible (using same shipping boxes and containers to send materials to venue).
- Make conference presentations available online for attendees after the event.

## **Report and Conference Improvement**

- Use results of data gathering effort and attendee survey to improve programming, organization, speakers, activities and sustainable initiatives for future conferences.
- Consider developing an Annual Conference and Exhibition report for electronic distribution or publication on our website that includes key facts and figures on demographics, economic benefits, environmental performance and social responsibility.
- Update the Sustainable Conferencing Guidelines as needed to reflect lessons learned, add new best practices, remove initiatives that no longer contribute value, etc.



## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

American Institute of Architects, "[Sustainability 2030: Green Meetings Guidelines](#)", 2007

[David Suzuki Foundation website](#), "How to Host a Green Conference"

Events DC "[Stay Green](#)" [Environmental Stewardship webpage](#)

Green Meeting Industry Council, "[Triple Bottom Line Approach to Sustainable Food and Beverage Practices in Meeting and Events Industry](#)", 2016

San Francisco's Moscone Center, "[Meeting Professionals Green Guide](#)"

[Sustainable Aviation Guidance Alliance](#) (SAGA) website

United Nations Environment Program, "[Sustainable Events Guide: Give Your Large Event a Small Footprint](#)", 2012

U.S. Government Services Administration, Federal Travel Regulation, "Guide to Sustainable Conference"

U.S. Green Building Council, GreenBuild International Conference and Expo, "[Sustainability Report 2015](#)", 2015

## **APPENDIX A**

List / link to conference vendor, venue (hotels and convention center), and host airport sustainability initiatives

Hargrove Sustainability Policy (Conference Designer)

# Sustainability Program



Hargrove

# Environmental Policy Statement

We will conduct our business and operations in the most eco-friendly manner while growing our business and producing effective results for our clients. We will encourage our staff to become leaders in this effort and continually seek out new alternatives and solutions to improve our performance.



## PEOPLE

Impeccable quality service is the foundation of our company. Offering clients innovative products is our goal — including eco-friendly programs.



## PLANET

Comprehensive eco-friendly program based on reduce, reuse and recycle philosophy. Honest approach to program that produces lasting results.



## PROFIT

Believe environmental responsibility and business success are not mutually exclusive.

# Green Tips

## 1. PLAN EARLY

Early preparation is the number one way to reduce your show's carbon footprint and impact on the environment. With plenty of planning time Hargrove will help you iron out every details and avoid those last minute shipments and other energy depleters. A well-designed signage strategy ensures graphics can be repurposed and waste is minimized. And, with plenty of prep time, we can help you educate your exhibitors on implementing a successful green exhibit program.

## 2. BEWARE OF THE BUZZ WORDS

Just because materials are called biodegradable and recyclable, doesn't mean they will be. These terms rely on future actions that may not be feasible and may consume additional resources to achieve. The reality is that there are very few landfills in the U.S. that can achieve biodegradation and shipping recycled materials to appropriate centers can be even more damaging to the environment.

## 3. LAUNDRY LISTS DON'T EQUAL RESULTS

It's easy to get caught up in long lists of what a company is doing to be environmentally friendly, but in reality don't add up to much. At Hargrove, we focus on areas that truly impact our carbon footprint; minimize use of natural resources and ensure we recycle every step of the way.

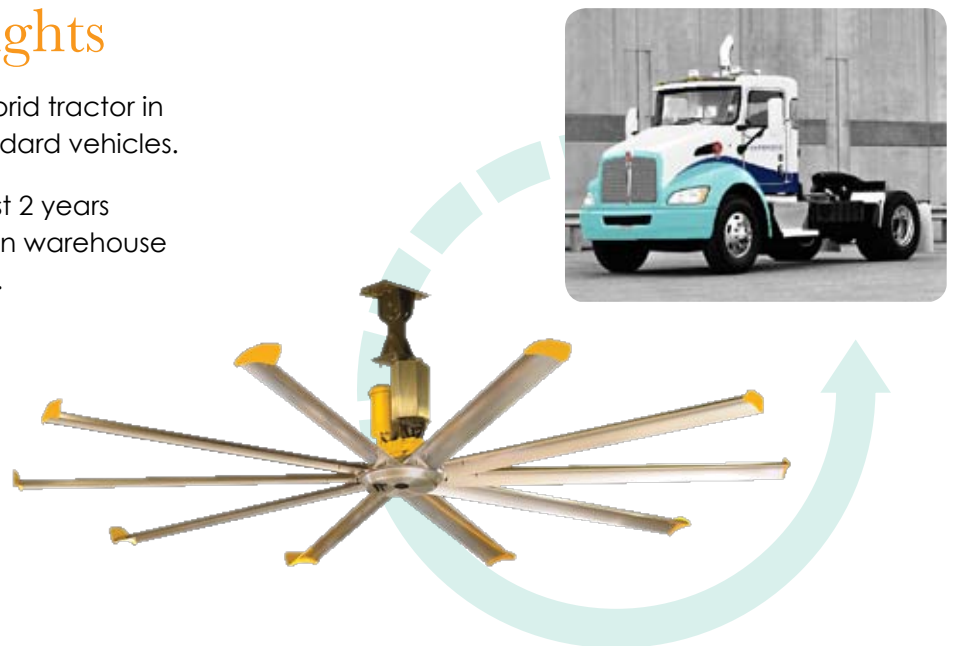
## 4. DON'T FORGET YOUR EXHIBITORS

A major component of a show's ability to achieve greater sustainability is its ability to encourage best practices from exhibitors. At Hargrove we offer a variety of tools and resources to encourage eco-friendly practices by exhibitors including online ordering, green incentives and training.

## Eco-friendly Highlights

First private firm in the U.S. to buy a hybrid tractor in 2009 which uses 30% less fuel than standard vehicles.

Retrofitted almost 3,000 lights in the last 2 years and installed large-scale custom fans in warehouse reducing energy consumption by 30%.



# Summary of Hargrove's Environmental Plan

## Corporate

### REDUCE

**Technology** — Pursue ongoing technology improvements that reduce carbon footprint. *Example:* energy star compliant PCs, collaboration software.

**Energy Efficiency and Consumption** — Reduce lighting consumption and HVAC costs. Examples: monitor thermostats and HVAC operating times, seal air leaks, add insulation, retrofit light fixtures. 500,000 kwhs saved in 2009 and energy costs reduced by 30%.

Long-term plan — pursue alternative energy solutions including solar and wind.

**Air Quality** — Maintain a smoke-free campus and monitor exhaust, air filtration and dust collection systems.

**Water Conservation** — pursue ongoing conservation of water. *Example:* Repaired all leaky faucets and underground leaks. Result: Saving thousands of gallons per month.

**Fuel Consumption** — Implement all-hybrid tractor fleet within 5 years. 90% of forklifts and other show site vehicles use natural gas or propane depending on city/venue.

**Inks and Paints** — Utilize environmentally friendly inks, paints and other solvents.

**Janitorial supplies** — Ensure 100% of corporate and show site janitorial supplies made of 100% recycled materials which exceed EPA guidelines. Purchase 100% corporate and show site cleaning supplies with Green Seal approval.

### REUSE

**Expand Art Program** — Hargrove partners with area educators to supply new scrap substrates and graphics returning from show site to supplement limited art supplies. Our goal is to expand this program to as many schools as possible.

### RECYCLE

**Waste Minimization and Recycling Program** — Maintain a comprehensive single stream waste management program. *Example:* recycled close to 150 tons of material in 2009.

**Recycle all light bulbs** using a 3rd party vendor.

**Office Supplies** — Recycle office supplies including paper, cell phones, batteries, computers, printers, and cartridges.

# Summary of Hargrove's Environmental Plan

## Client Services and Products

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### REDUCE

**Research** — Continue research and close partnership with major substrate manufacturers to procure and encourage ongoing development of green materials.

**Focus on Exhibitors** — Comprehensive, environmentally friendly program for exhibitors includes: training, shipping, online kits, ordering, suppliers, services and products such as trash liners, tabletops, wooden tables, magazine bins and booth headers.

**Green Options** — Present green designs, substrates and other solutions to clients.

**Vendors and Subcontractors** — Require all vendors and subcontractors to pursue environmentally friendly programs. *Example:* Use shippers who use corrugated boxes, recycled Visqueen and are SmartWay Partners with the EPA.

**Online Show Management** — Expand HCC Client Connection to ensure clients approve graphics, floor plans and other manage show documents online.

### REUSE

**Graphics** — Design and fabricate graphics that can be reused and repurposed.

**Aluminum Fabrication** — Use recycled aluminum framing, not wood, in fabrication as it is reusable.

**Earth-friendly Suppliers** — Use suppliers who source, design and produce eco-friendly rental furniture.

**Carpet, Drape, Staging, Props, Decor** — Maintain 100% reuse program.

**Shipping Materials** — Use 100% recycled, repurposed or earth-friendly shipping materials.

### RECYCLE











**Carpet/padding** — Continue program to ensure 100% of carpet and padding is recycled.

**Graphics** — Ensure graphics and signage recycled on show site and at headquarters.

**Venues** — Partner closely with venues to ensure Hargrove compliance with waste management processes and procedures.

# Substrate Resource Guide

Selecting substrates can be a confusing process. Selection of these materials can affect the look and feel of your show as well as your bottom line. This easy-to-use guide provides the basics regarding substrates so you can make educated decisions for your show.









HARGROVE GREEN GRADE*	SUBSTRATE	MATERIAL	COMMON USES	PROS	CONS
	Alucobond and Dibond	Aluminum over poly core	High-end, long-term signage	Can be reused	Cost, Limited colors, Cannot be recycled
	Cambridge	Foam-Core	HMS inserts and small directionals	Less expensive	Not recyclable or biodegradable
	Coroplast	Plastic	Smaller exterior signage	Recyclable	Seldom is recycled
	BioBoard	White Printable Cardboard	Rigid signs	Made of high % of recyclable content	Cost
	Duraplast	PVC faced Fome-Cor	Larger directional signage	Recyclable, medium level cost	Seldom is recycled
	Enviroboard	Paperboard	Indoor/outdoor applications	100% recycled, FSC certified	Cost
	Printable Fabric	Polyester	Matte finish, large format banners	Light weight, Reusable	Cost, Not recyclable
	Fome-Cor	Poly foam bonded between paper	Interior signage	Inexpensive	Cannot be recycled
	Gatorfoam	Poly foam bonded between paper	Cut outs, large signage	Can be re-used	Cost, Cannot be recycled
	HP Light	Paper based	Medium size signs	Recyclable	Cost, Low quality output

\* Five leaves denotes a more ecofriendly product.

One leaf denotes products that are not as environmentally friendly.



# Substrate Resource Guide

HARGROVE GREEN GRADE	SUBSTRATE	MATERIAL	COMMON USES	PROS	CONS
	Insite Bioboard	Specially formulated Fome-Cor designed to biodegrade more efficiently in specific landfills	HMS inserts and smaller directionals	Biodegradable	Cost, Landfills unavailable
	Mesh	PVC	Outdoor banners	Light weight	Cannot be recycled
	Showcard	Cardboard	Small signs such as ID signs	High % of recycled material and typically is recycled	Semi-flexible
	Sintra	Solid PVC product	Curved graphics, outdoor uses	Recyclable, reusable	Seldom is recycled
	Tyvek	Polyethylene Non-woven Fiber	Flexible banners and other signage	Durable Class A Flammable Light weight	Cost, Recyclable by manufacturer
	Polystyrene	Polyester-based material	Curved graphics, outdoor uses	100% Recyclable	Seldom is recycled
	Ultra DP	Fome-Cor	HMS inserts and small directionals	Inexpensive	Not recyclable or biodegradable
	Vinyl	PVC	Flexible banners and other signage	Inexpensive, Quality output	Cannot be recycled

## HARGROVE SUSTAINABLE GRAPHICS PHILOSOPHY

-  Select vendors who offer recycled content from sustainable resources
-  Ensure materials fabrication limits use of natural resources, waste and pollution
-  Ship new materials in the most eco-friendly manner
-  Educate clients on materials, future reuse and solvent selection
-  Partner with venues and third parties to manage recycling, reuse and disposal of graphics.