

INTRODUCING

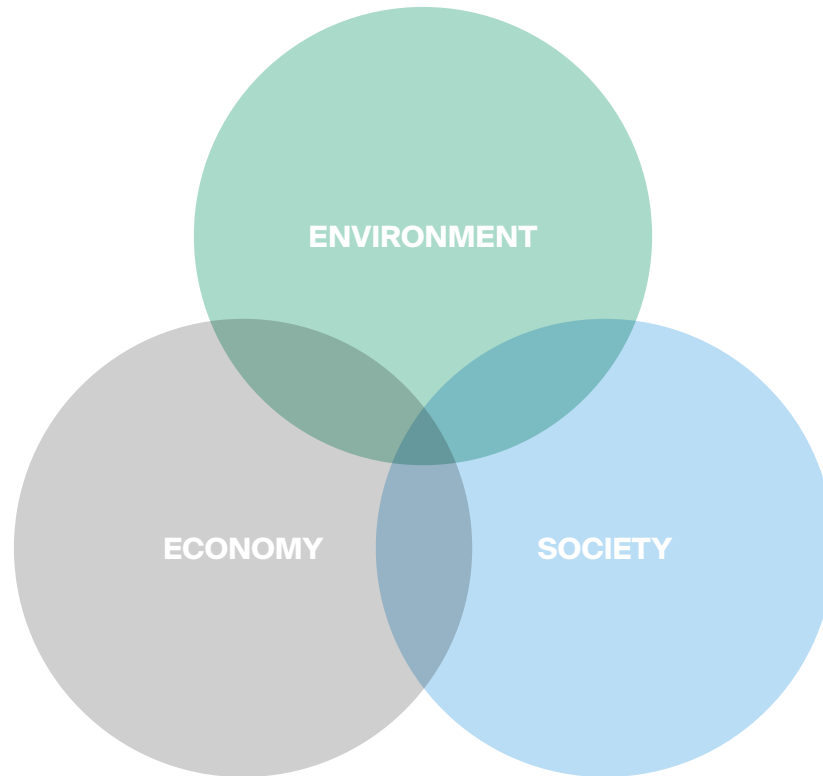
Destination Canada's Canadian Business Events
Sustainability Plan: A roadmap for inspiring
sustainability across the nation.

St. John's

Newfoundland and Labrador

Destination Canada strongly believes that meetings and events are catalysts for economic development beyond tourism benefits, sparking investment, trade, talent attraction, research partnerships, and so much more. Recognizing that sustainability continues to be a top priority across a range of industries, Destination Canada took the bold move of launching its [*Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan*](#) in May 2022. The timing felt right. In November 2021, the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) launched the Glasgow Declaration

on Climate Action in Tourism. This commitment by some of the biggest players in the industry to slash emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, achieving Net Zero by 2050, was further cemented during COP27 with the launch of the event industry's own road map to Net Zero carbon. Recent evidence of climate change and disasters, floods, record heatwaves and forest fires confirm for us that as a national destination we must show leadership and become agents for positive change.

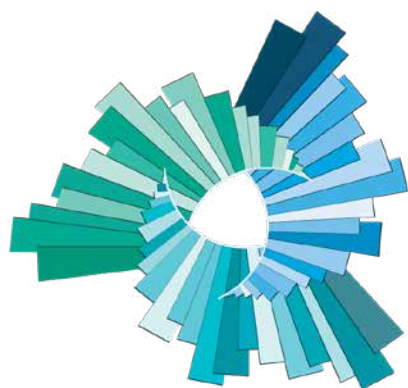


The *Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan* is a first-of-its-kind national program that focuses on the three key pillars of sustainability – environmental, socio-cultural and economic – in equal measure, through a business events lens. When we were considering the role Destination Canada must play in the industry's journey toward greater sustainability, we quickly realized we were in a unique position; we are not one destination but many destinations within one of the largest countries in the world.

The vision for the *Canadian Business Event Sustainability Plan* was cemented when we reviewed our destination partners' own sustainability plans and found that progress varied across the country. We knew that by implementing a team approach, sharing best practices and aligning each other's goals and objectives, we could inspire as a national destination with our comprehensive sustainability

efforts. So, we set out to establish a plan that would not only advance Canada's sustainability and regenerative approach to tourism but could be emulated globally, to support real, positive change within the business events industry. As a national tourism organization, if we can do it, it is our hope that other NTOs will be inspired to as well.

Ultimately, our goal is to help global clients develop business events across Canada with sustainability at their core, specifically targeting international associations, conferences, trade exhibitions, incentive travel, workshops and seminars as well as corporate meetings. We faced the challenge head on of convincing our destinations of the need for this collaborative work, building trust in the process, and ultimately convincing them to co-invest in the strategy. Success was realized by the commitment of 16 of Canada's business events destinations.



GLOBAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Together we leaned into the work ahead of developing an inventory of sustainability initiatives currently taking place in their destinations, partnering with the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-I), the leading sustainability benchmarking and improvement program for destinations globally. The GDS-I offers a performance measurement program which examines environmental, socio-cultural and economic initiatives, the business events supply chain within each destination and overall governance, an important element which allows sustainability initiatives to grow and thrive. Using 69 indicators aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals as its guide, the GDS-I evaluates sustainability efforts at each participating destination, provides feedback on strengths and weaknesses, along with recommendations on unique opportunities to increase sustainability efforts locally.

To drive change within Canadian destinations, we designed the plan to have three phases, the first focusing on training through workshops. We're bringing similar language to all our destinations to foster confidence in talking about sustainability – so they have the knowledge to share their story about being regenerative, net zero, and all the facets of sustainability. Phase two incorporates the benchmarking process with GDS-I. Phase three is about sharing the results in open and transparent ways. All destination partners will take part in a masterclass of storytelling and communications strategies, equipping them with the tools to share and amplify their sustainability story. This will be combined with the GDS-I dashboard created for each destination that will be released this November, showcasing existing sustainability initiatives. To match the hard work of these destinations, Destination Canada has also partnered with Greenstep, a leading Canadian firm in sustainability, to evaluate the organization's own efforts and propose a plan to reach net-zero carbon emissions. Not stopping there, Destination Canada worked hard to ensure its signature event, [Innovate Canada](#) was carbon neutral this year and will continue to be in the future.

“Our ultimate goal is to spark real change by helping to increase knowledge of the environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts that events can have in our destinations. Beyond driving more sustainable events within Canada, we are striving to become a model for countries around the world. We want to show clients that sustainable events can be done, while maintaining a positive experience for all. That’s the collaborative advantage of this plan.”

- Virginie De Visscher, Acting Executive Director
Business Events, Destination Canada.

Destination Canada's efforts have started to be recognized globally as well. This spring, the Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan was awarded the IMEX-Events Industry Council (EIC) Innovation in Sustainability Award. Upon presenting the award, EIC CEO Amy Calvert said, *“The IMEX-EIC Innovation in Sustainability Award places a very deliberate focus on innovation, creative thinking, and collaboration. This plan along with a culture that supports accelerating impact through the power of the collective is one that serves as a model for our industry.”*

In 2024, Destination Canada will roll out its collection of actionable sustainability programs for business events hosted in Canada. With the understanding that working towards greater sustainability is a continuous journey, Destination Canada has set up a task force of sustainability experts (academics, researchers, industry leaders and destination representatives) to provide guidance and expertise. Through focus and affinity groups, consisting of global incentive and association experts, we will also continually collect feedback, trends and reactions on sustainability and the *Canadian Business Events Sustainability Plan* so that we keep raising the bar for sustainable business events in Canada and worldwide.