

HOTEL SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Implementation Guidance for GSTC Alignment

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) was created jointly by UN agencies, prominent international conservation NGOs, and leading hospitality and tourism companies to develop global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism - the [GSTC Criteria](#). The Criteria are used for education and awareness-raising, policy-making for businesses and government agencies and other organization types, measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certifications. They are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism. Both sets are arranged in four pillars: (A) Sustainable management; (B) Socio-economic impacts; (C) Cultural impacts; and (D) Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reducing pollution, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes). Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.

OVERVIEW

This Guidance document aims at helping hotels get started in fulfilling criterion A1 – **Sustainability Management System (SMS)** of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Industry Criteria.

Greenview, a leading sustainability consulting and research firm with over a decade of experience working with dozens of hotel companies, has prepared this guidance document to support hotels in their development and implementation of an SMS to support alignment with the GSTC Industry Criteria for Hotels.

This Guidance has been designed to provide an overview of how a SMS should be implemented in a hotel property, which can be adapted and enhanced to cover a hotel portfolio.

A Sustainability Management System (SMS) will involve the hotel's General Manager, department heads and supervisors, and line-level staff. In a well-developed SMS, nearly all staff are involved in some form, and several staff have designated roles and responsibilities to ensure that the aspects are covered.

Who should use this Guidance?

This guidance is intended for the key parties involved in the preparation and implementation of the sustainability management system, including General Manager/ Assistant GM, Hotel Manager, designated sustainability champion, sustainability group members and Director of Engineering. The designated sustainability champion, who is responsible for coordinating and monitoring many cross-functional components of the system, can obtain all the fundamental SMS set-up information here. From planning to the actual implementation, elements necessary in the SMS are briefly discussed one-by-one. Examples are provided to facilitate users' understanding of how to execute in practice.

What is a Sustainability Management System (SMS)?

- In general, an SMS is used to identify the risks, outline corresponding management, and monitor and document performance relating to the environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, and safety issues which will be based on the size, business nature, and scope of an organization.
- In the case of the GSTC Industry Criteria for Hotels, the SMS pertains to the accommodation's operator and in some cases the owner, where it involves managing and controlling the identified risks and any related crises. Through regular monitoring, the SMS sets a platform for continuous improvement in sustainability performance. Most importantly, the SMS and all related information has to be clearly documented (and not just for a third-party audit for GSTC certification, but as part of the ongoing SMS process).
- An SMS is not a software: it is a process to continually do better. It may involve Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), training, templates, and software (such as the [Greenview Portal](#)) for part of it, but overall will be part of the ongoing process and good management. Most importantly, an SMS is ongoing, and will need to be improved over time, as the issues relating to sustainable development continue to evolve.

How does an SMS apply to a hotel?

- In good practice, an SMS is a **cost-effective** and **organized** approach to manage different aspects related to the sustainability performance of a hotel, which address expectations from its guests, employees, and local communities.
- This guidance structures the SMS using the *Plan-Do-Check-Act* approach which is which is common for the well-developed ISO 14001 environmental management system (EMS), which can apply to any organization of any size, type, or industry. The SMS requirements of GSTC can be seen as an expansion of the topics covered, from just environmental aspects to all sustainability aspects including social and economic aspects, and prescriptively tailored to the realities of a hotel.
- Hotels can follow the *Plan-Do-Check-Act* step-by-step to set up their SMS in alignment with the GSTC Criteria.

PLAN

The *Plan* step is where the hotel sets up the structure for what issues it will manage, how it will manage them, and who will be responsible.

1

Set up the sustainability group, committee, or “green team.” This can be a formal and engaged group, or it can be a group comprised of those responsible for each area covered in the SMS who collectively form the group. Their actions, roles, and responsibilities should be outlined. Ideally, this group should have representation from all functional departments in the hotel, and consist of a range from top department heads, supervisors/coordinators, and even line-level staff, and should be tied to specific job functions and the organizational chart, to ensure continuity in the case of turnover or staff shifting positions. To govern or manage the team, one person within the sustainability group should be indicated as the Single Point of Accountability (SPA) for documenting the system and leading various efforts, usually called **Sustainability Champion**. This person can be a dedicated position, or a partial role of an existing position, or a volunteer passionate about the topic passionate about the topic and empowered with the time and resources necessary to dedicate to the system. The Sustainability Champion would also be responsible for reporting the progress of the SMS to the Top Management during Executive Committee meetings or other occasions. The roles and responsibilities of the SMS group members, in particular the Sustainability Champion, should be communicated within the organization through internal communication channels, such as memos, emails, newsletters, intranet and town hall meetings.

2

Once the team is set up, the next step is to define the issues that will need to be managed. These issues will fall under one of the following categories and areas needed for certification to the GSTC Criteria:

- Environmental (e.g., energy efficiency)
- Social (e.g., community charitable giving)
- Cultural (e.g., supporting cultural heritage)
- Economic (e.g., supporting local businesses)
- Quality (e.g., customer satisfaction)

The above are the basic set for GSTC, but the nuances and applicability of each will depend on the hotel’s type, location, and customer segmentation. To further define the specific issues and understand their relevance and importance to the hotel, certain actions can be undertaken, including:

- Conduct a risk assessment based on the likelihood and severity of different issues in order to identify significant sustainability aspects to be addressed, including regulatory risks, water risk, climate risk, socio-economic risk, biodiversity, political risk, industry best practice benchmarking, and performance benchmarking. For example, hotels in Shanghai, China are required by the authorities to stop offering disposable toiletry kits unless customers ask, so the offering of single-use plastic toiletry will be an issue with high risk that needs to be managed.
- Check the compliance with all applicable local, national and international legislation and regulations – designate appropriate person / team to set up, regularly review and maintain up-to-date list of all applicable legal requirements in terms of a legal register. Be aware of the status of compliance.
- Look to your local destination’s hotel associations and initiatives. Guidance on key sustainability aspects should have been covered as well as any collaboration or forum on key issues affecting hotels or guests.
- Seek input from employees and guests to understand their expectations on the sustainability performance of hotel, such as being energy efficient, occupational health & safety concerns, eliminating single-use plastic straws. Their feedback can be collected via the sustainability group members and customer surveys.

Based on the hotel’s location and type, some issues will be more important than others. In areas where water scarcity is a serious issue, water will be an important issue to be managed. For an urban hotel within a city center, issues such as indigenous rights, land rights, water access, and illegal wildlife and artifact trade may not be relevant, but local economies and energy efficiency may be particularly important.

As a base, the following areas will likely need to be managed in a hotel and should be examined:

Category	Topics / Aspects
 Environmental	Climate change risks Environmental purchasing Efficient building and infrastructure Energy conservation Water conservation Greenhouse gases emissions Cleaner transportation Wastewater Solid waste Harmful substances (e.g. pesticides, paints, cleaning materials) Biodiversity conservation and preservation Invasive species avoidance Wildlife interaction, harvesting and trade Animal welfare Pollution monitoring and minimization
 Social	Health and safety Equal opportunity Anti-harassment and anti-exploitation Decent work Employee payment Employee satisfaction and feedback Staff training and career advancement Accessibility Community support (both in-kind and cash) Impact on local communities Destination engagement (e.g. partnership with local communities, NGOs and other organizations)
 Cultural	Tourist visits to cultural sites and indigenous communities Protecting cultural heritage Presenting cultural heritage Use of artefacts
 Economic	Land, water and property rights Local employment Local purchasing Support to local entrepreneurs
 Quality	Legal compliance Customer satisfaction Visitor safety Regular sustainability performance reporting and communication Accurate promotion

Still not sure how to do it? There are consultancy firms offering risk assessment service, such as [Sustainability Benchmarking, Risk & Opportunities Assessment](#) provided by Greenview.

The next step is to create the sustainability policies, actions, and procedures to manage these issues and ensure all related supporting documentation is on file and available for updating.

- **Common policies** which are prescribed in the GSTC Industry Criteria for Hotels include an overall sustainability policy, environmental purchasing policy, and human rights policy covering anti-harassment and anti-exploitation. Policies should be defined and approved by the General Management. Guiding reference in sustainability policies can be found in the Greenview Portal.
 - o Sustainability policy: outline your commitment to practices and standards designed to promote environmentally and socially responsible operations. It is the foundation of the SMS (criterion A3).
 - o Environmental purchasing policy: outline your strategy and commitment to incorporate environmental considerations during procurement (criterion D1.1).
 - o Human rights policy: outline your corporate commitment to respect different aspects of human rights, in particular commitment against exploitation and harassment. It should be one of the policies under Human Resources Department (criterion B5).
- **Common procedures** which are step-by-step instructions to control sustainability processes and monitor the progress, including sustainable purchasing procedures, waste disposal procedures in housekeeping and F&B departments, utility maintenance procedure, supplier assessment procedure, green office procedure, internal audit procedure, monitoring, and record procedure. Procedures should be drafted and forming part of their standard operational procedures, so that they have clear steps, staff accountability, and mechanisms for documenting that they have been carried out within their respective intervals.

As a GSTC-recognized System, the Greenview Portal supports the planning stage by outlining a step-by-step procedure for implementing several procedures in the do phase, that can be done within the Greenview Portal. These include:

- o ongoing tracking of energy, water, waste, and carbon emissions;
- o ongoing tracking and logging of projects that reduce utility consumption;
- o ongoing tracking and logging of community and charitable giving activities;
- o guidance on actions to increase efficiency and community benefit;
- o guidance on risk assessment and crisis management procedure;
- o guidance on responsible procurement processes;
- o guidance on local sourcing processes; and
- o guidance on green cleaning products and integrated pest management procedures.

Most importantly, the hotel will have to demonstrate that the SMS is up and running in accordance with GSTC in order to obtain certification by an external auditing firm. That means that committee meetings, risk assessment checklists, reviews, and approvals of policies and procedures are being carried out, and other evidence should be gathered and filed as part of this system, at least on an annual basis.

To clearly summarize how the SMS is being established and implemented in the hotel, an SMS Manual should be created as the “master document.” Following the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach and structure, the SMS Manual is designed to describe how the sustainability issues are managed by the hotel. Roles, authorities & responsibilities of different job functions, sustainability policies, to the application and use of different implementation procedures and instructions, all need to be covered.

Overall, this Plan step sets up the structure, procedures, and team roles for carrying out the *Do* step.

DO

The *Do* step is where the hotel carries out the things it says it should be doing in the Plan step, and documents accordingly so that the “doing” can be reviewed in the next step.

1

The first step is for the GM/AGM to ensure that sufficient resources are available for the implementation of SMS. This way, the staff members tasked to carry out actions related to SMS are given time to do so by their bosses; and if any costs are involved, they are also properly budgeted.

2

Based on the key sustainability issues identified during the planning stage, integrate sustainability practices into existing brand standards, SOPs, and instructions in order to manage these issues and reduce the impacts. Advanced consultation and communication with relevant departments should be done before the execution in order to enhance the internal buy-in. For example, putting waste separation as part of the Standard Operating Procedure in kitchen will change the waste collection and separation flow which may involve the purchase of extra bins or the placement of bins; or the addition of anti-harassment policy in the Staff Handbook would need the input and approval from HR and even Legal Department; or the change of paper purchase from normal paper to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-Certified paper would involve the change of the brand standard that would impact across the whole hotel/hotel company.

3

Conduct / arrange sustainability related trainings for staff to raise their awareness of their contribution to the effectiveness of the sustainability management system. For example, the general introduction of the hotel’s SMS should become part of the staff orientation.

4

Be transparent to report and communicate sustainability initiatives to external interested parties, including guests, business partners, community, owners, through various platform. For example, hotel webpage, in-room media, signs, etc. Note that this is also itself a criteria requirement of the GSTC Criteria (criterion A3: Reporting and Communication).

5

Identify ways to motivate guests and business partners to partake in the hotel's sustainability efforts. For example, the Supplier’s Code of Conduct becomes part of the contract terms, and guests are invited to reuse linens and towels for saving water.

6

Monitor, measure and record sustainability performance indicators, including environmental, social, human rights, health, and safety performance according to the defined intervals by personnel clearly defined in the SOPs and instructions.

- Common environmental indicators, all of which can be tracked at a hotel property and for a portfolio in real-time through the Greenview Portal:
 - Energy consumption total and intensity
 - Water consumption total and intensity used per occupied room
 - Greenhouse gas emissions total and intensity
 - Amount of solid waste generated, disposed, and diverted in total and intensity
 - Investments in efficiency and savings in cost and consumption obtained
- Common operational and social indicators, most of which can be tracked directly or indirectly via the Greenview Portal include:
 - Purchasing and use of consumable and disposable goods
 - % of employment from local community
 - Donations (including in-kind and cash) to the community

CHECK

The Check step is where the hotel monitors, assesses, and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of the SMS. It is not limited to internal performance, but also include feedback from external parties.

Core aspects of the Check step include:

1

Internal monitoring and audit – listing out the items to be monitored for checking the conformance with the defined procedures and instructions under the SMS. Hotels may consider integrating the list of items to existing QA audit checklists, so that existing internal audit team members can help in conducting cross department audits. Another option is conducting regular internal audits by SMS Committee members to check on conformance with SMS requirements. The role of who does what in auditing should be defined in the SMS documentation as well. Sample questions:

- Have energy, water, and waste performance been tracked and reviewed on a quarterly basis? Any record?
- Are front-line employees following defined procedures when performing daily job? For example, have housekeepers followed procedures to do on-site waste separation?
- Is energy saving equipment sourced by the Engineering Department for replacement?
- Are environmental permits maintained up-to-date and effective, i.e. within expiry date?
- Have staff trainings been conducted? Are attendance lists available?
- Are employees paid at least a living wage based on local jurisdiction requirements?
- Have in-kind and cash donations to charity/community been recorded?
- Is the list of applicable legal requirements filed and updated?
- Are the Sustainability Committee meeting minutes available?

2

Management Review – Top management (i.e. GM/AGM and/or Executive Committee) reviews progress towards sustainability targets and evaluates the effectiveness of action plans through the group designated for overseeing the SMS. Further sustainability action plans for driving continuous improvement should also be defined to be implemented afterward. Meeting minutes and action plans should be documented.

3

Feedback Collection - Maintaining an internal and external feedback collection system for effectively monitoring and assessing the hotel's impacts on stakeholders, including customer satisfaction, grievance, Whistle Blowing Policy, etc. Common feedback collection platforms:

- Customer satisfaction survey
- Employee survey
- Grievance reporting
- Whistle blowing

All the feedback and responses should also be documented.

ACT

The Act step is where the hotel reacts to findings and issues identified during the Check stage.

If any nonconformity occurs,

- Take action to immediately control and correct.
- Evaluate the need to take precautionary actions by asking “Why did this happen? What went wrong? Was it because of procedural deficiency or human factor? How can we improve the process?”, to eliminate the causes of the nonconformity.

During the *Check* step, if there are new opportunities or ideas, or changes in the operations, risks or criteria or legislation identified, a corresponding update of the SMS is necessary in order to ensure that the SMS procedures match with the real business operation. Taking these proactive actions for improving the SMS facilitates a continuous cycle of plan-do-check-act so that after *Act* comes *Plan* again.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Implementing an SMS at the Property

To set up the SMS, the hotel's top management should demonstrate leadership and commitment with respect to the program (and to GSTC). Top management refers to the General Manager (GM), Hotel Manager (HM), and the Executive Committee members of the hotel, and can potentially involve the owner's asset manager if owned by a separate party. For the robust implementation of the SMS, the hotel should then:

1

Set up the SMS governance structure, firstly setting up the sustainability group, which will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of SMS.

2

Include the GM as a sustainability group member, or alternatively, have the GM participate in most sustainability group meetings each year.

3

Assign a Sustainability Champion to be responsible for coordinating and leading the sustainability management system of the hotel. The Top Management can identify a mid-management staff, who is passionate in sustainability with an engaging personal character to be the Sustainability Champion.

4

Ensure that SMS sustainability group members and assigned roles collectively are responsible for:

- Managing property's sustainability efforts in alignment with your company's policies and goals.
 - Developing awareness of sustainability trends and all applicable legislations relating to environmental, social, and corporate governance.
 - Motivating staff and guests to partake in the property's sustainability efforts.
 - Exchanging best practices with sister properties.
 - Maintaining accurate records of sustainability-related data for the purpose of sustainability reporting and other sustainability communication efforts.
 - Identifying meaningful and impactful sustainability initiatives, including environmental, community and giving programs, for staff and guests to partake in.
 - Identifying meaningful and impactful sustainability-related partnerships for the property to partake in.
 - Onboarding additional or new SMS group members in the case of turnover and changing of property teams.
-

5

Conduct regular meetings with the sustainability group, for example quarterly/bi-annual meetings, to review the progress against sustainability targets and goals, and also look for ways to motivate the team and recognize progress.

Documentation

The hotel should create and maintain documented information in a manner sufficient to ensure a suitable, adequate, and robust SMS is in place.

- A **master inventory** should be developed that lists out the name, usage, and status of all the SMS related documentation.
- A **central documentation storage location** should be set for the ease of robust management. This can be on a property or corporate server, and should be electronic, with physical documentation available where it is helpful in the reality of ongoing hotel operations when people need physical documents (but think before printing!). The storage should then follow the inventory, for example numbering and naming folders within the directory, so that the team and auditors can easily find the referenced documents and ensure that related files are placed there correctly on a routine basis.
- Documentation includes **sustainability policies, sustainability procedures, instructions, licences, permits, and associated records** that can support the legal compliance status of the hotel. Only the latest version should be available for access and use by users. Old versions should be archived. Examples:
 - **Sustainability policies:** Sustainability Policy, Environmental Purchasing Policy, etc.
 - **Sustainability procedures:** Supplier Assessment Procedure, Waste Separation and Disposal Procedures, Guestroom Housekeeping Procedure, etc.
 - **Instructions:** Cleaning Detergent Usage Instruction, Pesticide Application Instruction, etc.
 - **Licences & Permits:** Building Licence, Wastewater Discharge Permit, Food Production Permit, Hotel Operation Licence, etc.
 - **Records:** Water bills, electricity bills, wastewater monitoring records, etc.

READY FOR THE NEXT LEVEL?

As you begin your journey toward certification to the GSTC Criteria, the SMS will be your backbone. Once you have looked into the SMS setup and are seeking further resources and tools, you can check out the [Greenview Portal](#) as a software to make it easier for all to follow this journey.

ABOUT GREENVIEW

Greenview is the world's leading provider of sustainability programs and data management for the hospitality and tourism sector. We support companies to design, implement, and monitor their corporate responsibility and sustainability platforms to drive profitability, streamline data, keep ahead of trends, and provide effective communication for stakeholders. Headquartered in Singapore, with a global team of experts located in 8 countries, we manage the hospitality sector's largest collaborative sustainability initiatives and leverage the power of this network to synergize value to our clients across three pillars of activity:



1 Corporate consulting and advisory



2 Greenview portal software



3 Collaborative industry initiatives

GREENVIEW CONSULTING & ADVISORY SERVICES

We work with companies of all sizes, from Fortune 200 to boutique hotel companies, to support your needs across the whole spectrum of sustainability. We specialize in the hospitality and tourism sector and provide relevant advice and effective programs.



Strategy & Program Development

You've been tasked with creating or upgrading a corporate responsibility program. We orient you on trends and best practices in all Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) areas, and help you devise a strategy to engage stakeholders, approach issues, set up your internal committee, and develop programs.



Corporate Sustainability Reporting

You need to credibly communicate your approach, programs, and performance across all environmental, social, and governance aspects. We cover the entire process, including reporting, drafting, and preparing your Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI) reports, Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB), and Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) responses with all accompanying calculations and documentation.



Company Programs

We help hotel companies develop and roll-out programs including green meetings, single-use plastic reduction, food waste management, modern slavery training, responsible sourcing, and more. We also provide services such as Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) regarding the environmental impact of important programs.



Calculations & Data Management

Carbon calculation, GHG inventories, tracking and analysis of goals relating to various UN Sustainable Development Goals invariably require working with data. We can save you time and money by streamlining data analysis and providing you with the tools to monitor, measure, and report all types of sustainability data and content.



Goal Setting

The yardstick of good corporate responsibility begins with the question "have you set targets?" These may include carbon emissions reduction, energy and water reduction, and socially-driven goals. We provide the advisory groundwork, analytical steps, and the data management to help you set and monitor your progress against relevant goals and targets, including Science-Based Targets.



Benchmarking

How does your company, your corporate platform, your property, your venue, or your portfolio compare against peers and competitors? Are you lagging in common practices? Up to par with best practices? Leading with innovation? We can run customized studies to evaluate you against standards, peers, or others to understand your strengths and gaps.



Benchmarking Risk & Opportunity Assessment

Physical and regulatory risks relating to climate change and resources are a large part of risk management discussions and due diligence. We provide portfolio-wide and individual risk assessments for areas relating to water, biodiversity, and green policies covering the range of ESG topics.



Rankings

You want to make the DJSI or improve in your scores in ISS, MSCI, SustainAlytics, Bloomberg ESG, JUST Capital, or the dozens of others out there. We know exactly what needs to be done to increase scores and streamline the process.



Investor Requests & Annual Filings

You've been handed a request by one of your investors or its asset managers to fill out a survey and respond to how you're approaching ESG issues. We help you respond to these requests effectively.

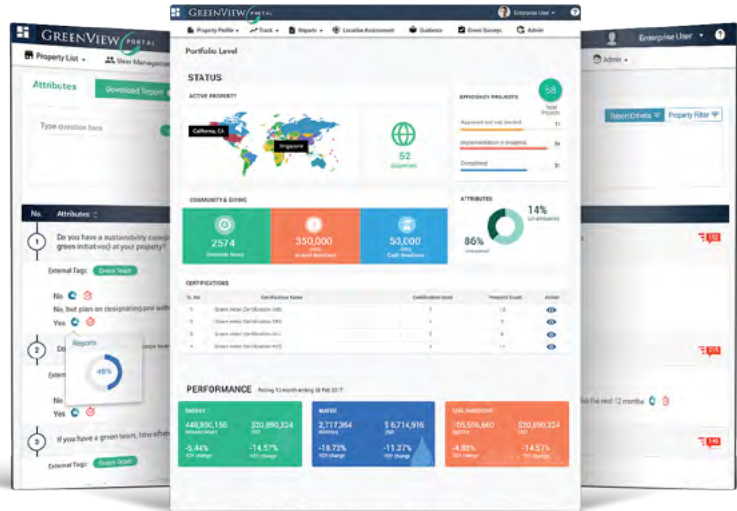
ABOUT THE GREENVIEW PORTAL

The Greenview Portal is a GSTC-recognized, robust sustainability management software specifically designed for properties, providing a comprehensive yet user-friendly system for your green champion and team. The Portal saves time and accelerates progress by offering easy tracking and reporting capabilities, whether for a single property or an entire portfolio of properties to work toward attaining GSTC certification.

Individual Property Dashboard



Company Dashboard



One place to collect all your sustainability data

Store all of your sustainability data including energy, water, waste, carbon, sustainable practices, efficiency programs, and community and giving.



Real time benchmarking of sustainable practices

Benchmark against your competition to stay ahead of the game. Trends data are available city-wide, country-wide, and world-wide with a growing data set.



Action-oriented dashboard

The dashboard provides a snapshot of your progress, performance, to-dos, missing data, and latest trends data to keep you current.



Automatic calculation of key metrics

The carbon footprint of properties is automatically calculated, and industry specific key metrics, such as per occupied room and per guest stays, are available through the portal.



Guidance on 80+ attributes (and growing)

We understand not everyone is proficient in sustainable practices. The Portal can be used as a library of resources on various sustainable practices from low to high levels of difficulty.



Track with convenience

Track your efficiency projects and your community and charitable giving activities for a property and an entire portfolio across all Sustainable Development Goals, harmonized by units and currency.



Unlimited number of users under the same property or portfolio

We understand that sustainable practice at a property covers all functional areas. So, a property can have users from front desk, housekeeping, and engineering without incurring additional fees.



Carbon reporting capability

It is becoming common practice for customers to request an environmental footprint report, which can be pulled in a few seconds in client ready Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI) format. HCMI is a standardized calculation and communication of the carbon footprint of hotel stays and meetings in a consistent and transparent way.