



# THE SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE: GLOBAL INSIGHTS





# CONTENTS



- 03** INTRODUCTION
- 05** REGIONAL INSIGHTS
  - 05** NORTH AMERICA
  - 07** UNITED KINGDOM
  - 08** EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA
  - 09** ASIA PACIFIC
  - 10** LATIN AMERICA
- 11** DOING OUR PART
- 12** PARTNERS GETTING IT RIGHT
- 13** LOOKING AHEAD





# WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Sustainability runs broadly across environmental, social and economic spectrums. While climate change and carbon emissions are clear targets for reducing negative environmental impacts, there are much wider areas of focus that also blend into sustainability such as wellness, DE&I, humanitarian work and the leveraging of localized products and services. Ultimately, sustainability within the meetings and events space requires a holistic approach that addresses these issues simultaneously.

However, every region in the world is at different maturities on the topic of sustainability. One of the reasons for this is that sustainability means something quite distinct to every region of the world.

For example, in some countries, sustainability includes a great emphasis on leveraging local culture. Whether this means utilizing local AV companies to avoid transporting identical equipment over long distances or using locally farmed vegetables, this approach has several benefits. In Europe, this includes reducing the carbon footprint of events, supporting local businesses and communities, and providing attendees with a more authentic and meaningful experience. In Latin America, this means shifting the focus internally towards local culture and educating suppliers as such.

In other regions, humanitarian and charity work are critical non-environmental focused aspects of sustainability. In North America, BCD Meetings & Events supports key events including Human Trafficking Awareness Day, National Human Trafficking Prevention Month, the End It Movement with ECPAT and A21's Walk For Freedom. In Mexico, there is significant support for Aldeas Infantiles and the APAC Foundation (Asociación Pro Personas con Parálisis Cerebral) that helps people with cerebral palsy.

It's important to understand that the topic of sustainability can be an emotional one and smaller, non-travel related components can be perceived to be just as significant as larger ones. An event that is planned with a geographical location in mind, that allows more people to travel via train (thus successfully reducing the CO2 impact), must not ignore vital "smaller" practices such as limiting single-use plastics and paper usage or considering an F&B concept based on local, seasonal and (partly) vegetarian food. In other words, offering sustainable travel opportunities as well as choosing sustainable destinations has the potential for creating the biggest impact.

Well-being is an emerging concept that also feeds into sustainability. The physical and mental health of attendees is part of an ongoing, larger conversation, and can be addressed in multiple ways, including but not limited to, offering meditation moments, walking breaks, aromatherapy, vegan food, yoga stretches, or other practices such as using natural lighting and "green spaces." These can lead to increased productivity, creativity, and engagement among attendees, in addition to creating a sense of purpose and social responsibility. It can also create a more positive and meaningful experience for everyone involved.

For markets that have advanced further in their sustainability journey, the challenge still lies in trying to bring some consistency across their supplier base and looking to enforce minimum benchmarks or practices. For markets that are at the beginning of their journey, integrating some sustainable actions into events may be an appropriate starting point.

At either end, it's crucial to inform and educate meeting and event attendees about sustainability efforts, as well as the reasoning behind them. This can help to foster a sense of collective responsibility, positive engagement, and acceptance for the undertaken actions.

# A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

## A MESSAGE FROM OLIVIA RUGGLE-BRISE

**Our company vision is to be the world's most trusted, innovative and sustainable travel management company. To continue towards this vision, we have a clear sustainability framework that aims to put sustainability at the center of our relationships with four key audiences - our company, our people, our business partners and our customers.**

Our understanding of the different facets of sustainability helps when defining what the future of sustainable meetings and events could look like. To further drive sustainability in our industry we must think and act more broadly. That's why BCD's definition of sustainability encompasses many areas, from wellness to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion to nature, social impact and climate action.

We believe we have a real opportunity to build a movement for sustainable travel, meetings and events - one that focuses on the purpose and impact of each meeting and each event. A movement that doesn't just look at reducing the environmental impact, but that identifies how we can generate a positive social impact too.

The impact of the climate crisis is being felt more keenly than ever before. With a rise in climate-related incidents like forest fires, flooding and drought, it is increasingly affecting the way that some populations live their day-to-day lives. With this, comes the firm realization of the interconnection between the wellbeing of our planet, our people and in ensuring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Decarbonization of the travel, meetings and events industries is essential to meeting the goals set out by the Paris Agreement. As more of our clients sign up to the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) and set their own science-based targets, as we at BCD have, they're looking to us to understand how their travel, meetings and events strategy can support these goals.

This motivation extends to employees and event attendees too—they want to understand the environmental credentials of the event and how waste is minimized. They also want to contribute positively to community initiatives, using the power of the collective that meetings and events bring together.

As people and experiences sit at the heart of any successful meeting or event, it's only natural that sustainability is now a key focus for the end-to-end process - from location choice and venue sourcing to communications, food choices and exhibit design.

That's why BCD's firm commitment to sustainability is essential as we work in partnership with our clients to form the landscape of sustainable meetings and events.

## A WORD FROM **MINOR** HOTELS

Minor Hotels contribute to social and environmental projects globally. Everywhere, sustainable tourism drives our choices. The way we conserve ecological resources to ensure sustainable growth with a positive impact are woven into each property's operations.

In our commitment to preserve the world's most beautiful destinations, promote diverse cultures and nurture our host communities, we operate in a way that is beneficial to people who live there, and sustainable for generations of residents and travelers still to come.

Sustainability is elevated as a true strategic priority and has shifted focus from positively impacting travelers and communities to transforming entire markets and behaviors beyond hospitality.

Minor Hotels pledges to minimize the environmental operational impacts and to advocate biodiversity conservation, remaining committed to reach net-zero value chain GHG emissions by no later than 2050.

Our projects reinforce the sense of sustainability through a course of action that benefits all stakeholders.



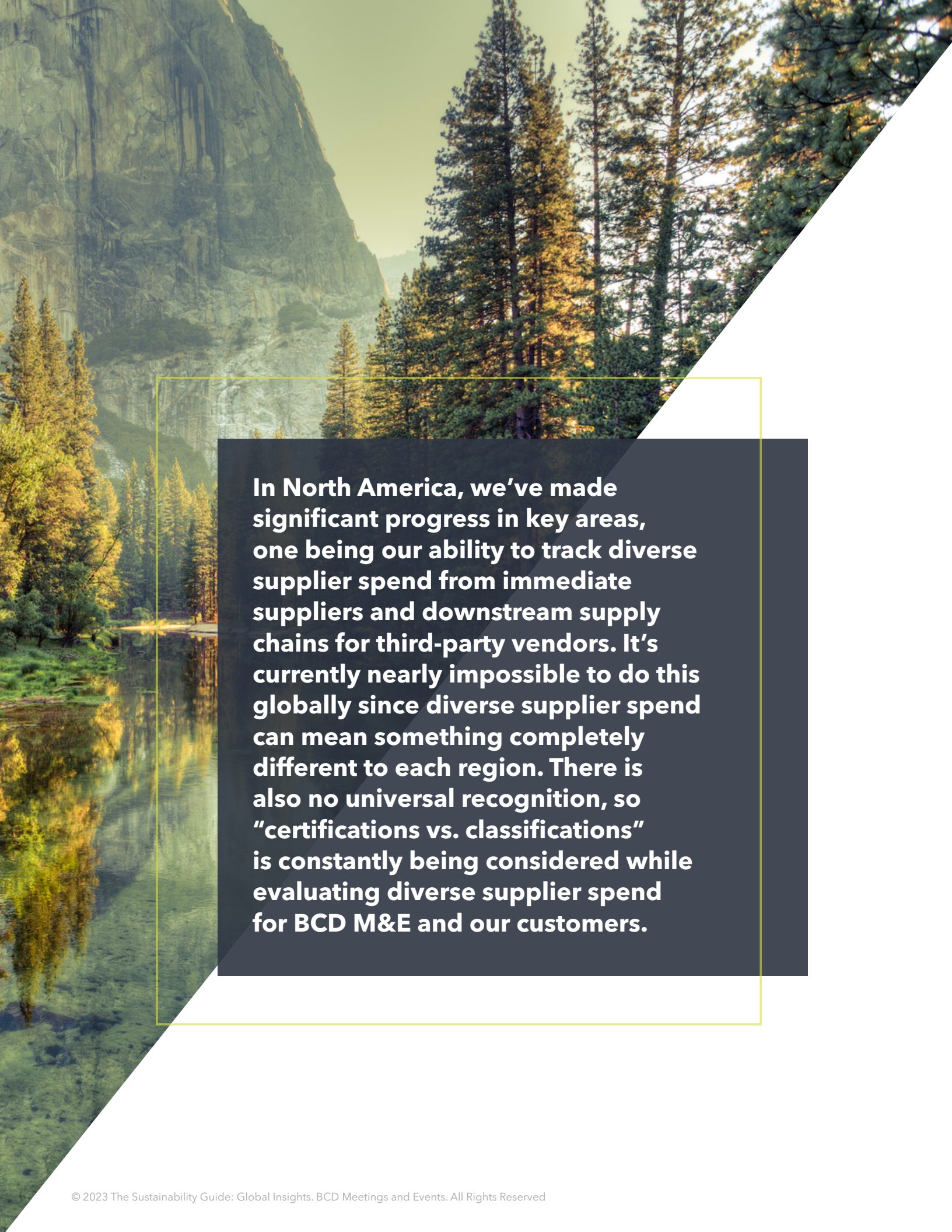
*Olivia*

**RUGGLES-BRISE**  
Vice President, Sustainability



**Click here** to read more on BCD Travel's commitment to sustainability and be on the lookout for their 2023 Sustainability Report.





**In North America, we've made significant progress in key areas, one being our ability to track diverse supplier spend from immediate suppliers and downstream supply chains for third-party vendors. It's currently nearly impossible to do this globally since diverse supplier spend can mean something completely different to each region. There is also no universal recognition, so "certifications vs. classifications" is constantly being considered while evaluating diverse supplier spend for BCD M&E and our customers.**

# NORAM

**NORTH AMERICA**

**We have global toolkits in place to manage progress in the broader area of sustainability in the meetings category. Two examples of how we are progressing are:**

- **Strategy:** Our 16-point Maturity Model scale evaluates, benchmarks, and offers recommendations across our customer base as to how to move a developing meetings strategy into a leading industry example. Sustainability is one of the core categories of this tool, which helps to bring ideas and progressive strategies to life for our customers, namely around sustainable business practices and innovative ways of working.
- **Operational:** We have a framework that can be applied to our clients' programs that uses either or both a scorecard and checklist for their event-level sourcing and planning, in addition to our carbon emissions calculator which has been co-developed with our consulting company, Advito. Advito also offers a strategic workshop to educate clients.

These tools either offer some handy tips and sustainable practices from venue selection through to event execution, and/or track decision-making impacts through the venue selection and planning process to provide a sustainability impact or "score" against each event. This enables us to report on aggregate across a program and identify trends, behaviors and analytics around how to improve focus and impact against sustainability goals within an organization.

Both the strategic and operational toolkits are proprietary developments for BCD M&E and leading practices in this space.





# WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING

**Sustainability was a clear strategy heading into the pandemic but it got sidelined by the impacts that were felt later. Today, it's a key topic of conversation with the majority of clients. While organizations recognize its significance, some sustainability initiatives have been impacted by inflation and meeting budget pressures.**

- Many organizations have aggressive emission or offset commitments, and there is huge value in tracking meeting and event activity as a key indicator to these goals. Air is a major factor as part of a meeting.
- We have seen clients pushing ahead with a “progress over perfection” mindset. There is no clear-cut way to manage and measure impact. All company goals are a little different and interpretation/measurements can flex from organization to organization.
- Global standards at the hotel or meeting level do not exist; however, many are forging ahead with tracking parts of their meeting or event, even if it's as simple as a virtual vs live event, or the destination choice based on transportation options and impacts.
- Progressive clients are tracking decisions on location or venue, based on carbon impact, and are invested in driving the industry through agency and supplier partnerships—collaborating on what can be done vs. what exists today and pushing forward on initiatives to start to make a difference.



## SUPPLIER RELATIONS DE&I FOCUS

**We embrace diversity as part of our value construct and continually strive to expand our pool of talent and partners with it in mind. Measuring supplier diversity, however, is a challenge as no universal standard of measurement exists yet. To help remedy this, we surveyed our non-hotel categories (250 suppliers including destination management, AV transport companies, performance providers, health and wellness vendors, and more). Based on their self-reported identification, we were able to define and measure entities in terms of diversity. We target 10-15% of our global spend with our diversified non-hotel partners. In 2023, 42% of BCD M&E suppliers (non-hotel) are considered diversified. 26% of our total global spend (based on 2022 reporting) sits with our diversified non-hotel partners.**





# UK UNITED KINGDOM

Sustainability took a temporary back seat during the pandemic, hitting nearly all sectors of the economy hard. However, it is safe to say the sustainability train is running again and in a state of rebound. Staying up to date with new trends regarding sustainable practices in the meetings and events industry, educating both clients and internal staff, and remaining consultative are high priorities in the UK.

The region remains committed to fostering a high level of client engagement while being duly aware that for some clients, sustainability is not high up on their agendas but they would like it to be. We continue to assist those clients with creating policies and KPIs that will promote their sustainability goals for the short term and long term, and to educate clients on various sustainable practices such as finding an appropriate eco-friendly venue, calculating the carbon emissions before an event, and simultaneously assessing the impact on budgets, employees and the planet.



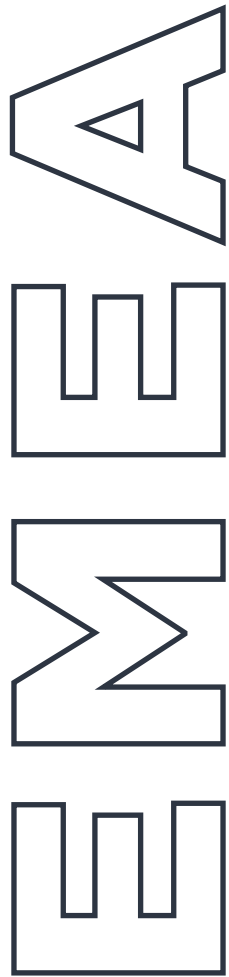
## WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING

Clients say they want agencies and hotels to take the lead on developing best practices for highly committed organizations that want to implement more sustainable meetings and events. We are currently in the process of forming a steering committee to share best practices/toolkits and to help fill the gaps in sustainability policy, with an eye to creating a roadmap for the future.

During a recent Client Forum, where we hosted 15 stakeholders from various organizations, attendees demonstrated a collaborative approach to learning together. While a handful are already utilizing advanced strategies such as tracking data, those who are not as advanced are keen to gain insight on creating a solid baseline from which they can catapult their own policies and programs.

**At our recent UK company conference, each of our 250 attendees was asked to help support our nominated charity, Revive. Upon registration, each person selected an item to donate to Revive's pantry appeal, which supports families with household products such as laundry detergent, toiletries, cleaning products etc. Hundreds of products were donated and couriered to the charity. For a small local charity, initiatives like this can make a real difference and harnessing the power of people's generosity is a natural fit. With these types of events, we can drive the often-overlooked community aspect of sustainability forward.**





## EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

This part of the world has a wide range of sustainability efforts. In France, where high-speed trains have been in the market for 40+ years, we see that sustainability is leading the conversation, thus impacting companies to ensure sustainability is top of mind. Recently, the French government banned domestic flights which would take less than 2.5 hours via rail. The initiative hopefully pushes regulations that steer companies in a more sustainable direction.

Also in this region, support for home office opportunities has increased following the lead of many North American companies. This shift has brought about several sustainability benefits such as a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. By eliminating the need for commuting, employees can significantly reduce their carbon footprint. Additionally, working from home can lead to energy conservation as there is less need for heating, cooling, lighting, and running other office appliances. Apart from environmental benefits, home office work can also have a positive impact on employee well-being. It provides the opportunity to balance personal and family life with work life.

## WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING

At a recent Client Forum, sustainability was definitely top of mind, but also moved down in priority in favor of inflation and cost containment initiatives. Clients reported on how difficult and complex it is to measure the carbon footprint impact of meetings and events. Our advice to them was to not get distracted by the complexity and instead get started with measuring their largest 10-100 global meetings and events this year. Then, double this number for the following years and establish a mindset/culture where CO2 is measured and hopefully reduced.

In addition, clients are facing challenges in defining what a sustainable event means for their specific industry and program. Therefore, it is important for us to assist in establishing a clear definition of sustainability that will guide their efforts to create more sustainable events and ultimately a green meetings and events policy/guideline. For overall program buy-in, it's necessary that participants understand and accept any sustainability changes or adaptations that are made.



**In 2022, we offered virtual yoga sessions to our staff to provide an opportunity for our employees to engage in a well-being activity and benefit from the expertise of a colleague who is a yoga teacher. About 40% of our colleagues participated in the session and the feedback was positive. Increasing the overall physical health of our employees has come into sharp focus since the pandemic. Joint activities and implementing physical exercise during a workday can improve people's productivity and creativity, strengthen engagement and also lead to an overall happier sense of mind. We are planning to offer more of these sessions, especially during internal events when our employees get together, such as joint sports activities in the morning or stretching breaks during meetings.**



# APAC

## ASIA PACIFIC

To say that this region varies in its sustainability practices is an understatement. APAC is made up of many diverse markets within one expansive region, and all come with competing priorities. Some countries have only just opened their borders for travel, while others are struggling with issues of extreme poverty. No one country has “arrived” with the “sustainability solution”, but there is high awareness of the current reality.

Climate change is viewed as highly important throughout APAC as we are clearly seeing its effects upon the region. Recently, Singapore hit record high temperatures and a period of haze is expected, both due to El Niño events. These changing weather patterns and their effects, from extreme rainfall to forest fires and landslides, have created awareness which translates into a desire to conduct business with those who are also serious about climate change. Hotel chains and enterprises are being vetted for how “green” they are, and many maintain sustainability officers at various properties. BCD M&E’s Venue Sourcing Scorecard is critical in helping clients identify who is the best fit for them in terms of their level of sustainability.



**A supplier in Singapore has terrarium workshops as an offering. These are great opportunities for customers to literally work in green spaces during their events with their attendees. However, they don’t stop with terrariums; they also create things like personalized moss frames which can be made on-site and taken home. The activities can be tailored as team-building exercises, close-out sessions and more. Attendees learn creative methods of repurposing everyday objects, such as glass jars or bottles into functional, unique terrariums. The activity promotes eco-consciousness by encouraging the use of recycled materials and fostering a mindset of sustainable crafting.**

## WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING

Most corporate clients already have internal sustainability agendas and participate in activities such as beach clean-ups, etc. However, when creating an event (for example, a team building exercise or an incentive trip), they reach out to agencies like BCD M&E to help them find vendors that match their sustainability goals. If a corporate client claims they are eco-friendly, then we assist in making sure their event is too, whether that means omitting the use of single-use plastics or providing credits for reduced housekeeping. Trust is the most critical component in our clients’ relationship with BCD M&E; we strive to support clients’ brands as the APAC region focuses on sustainability (with a heavy dose of realism) during this fairly recent period of business recovery in the post-Covid era.



# LATAM

## LATIN AMERICA

Sustainability conversations are on the rise, though not yet as commonplace as in NORAM or EMEA. While many companies show an interest in implementing sustainable actions in events, they do not have a clear-cut strategy to follow. However, a few important actions have been taken with our clients that will help establish sustainability within their strategies in the realm of events. For example, we have greater awareness among our suppliers on the importance of incorporating sustainable practices into their logistics and supply chain management strategies (in this way, suppliers can not only meet consumer demand for environmentally conscious products, but they can also reduce costs and improve their overall operations). We also have made efforts to reduce the use of paper and plastic at events.

The main differentiator for BCD M&E in this region is that most competitors don't yet have a vision as to how to create sustainable programs, where we are leaders in the field. Evidenced by our EcoVadis rating, we believe sustainability initiatives should have a 360° approach. The focus shouldn't be on a one-time event or project but should include short, mid and long-term actions with a very clear vision for the future.

## WHAT CLIENTS ARE SAYING

Sustainability as a topic isn't as prevalent as in other parts of the world, but when we share best practices and samples of what we are doing elsewhere, clients demonstrate a strong sense of curiosity to follow and implement as much as possible. They also indicate interest in participating in events in which they can help the community. For example, the APAC (Asociación Pro Personas con Parálisis Cerebral) bakery was created in 1990 as a result of a training workshop where young people with disabilities could work, giving them the opportunity for inclusion, participation and equal treatment. In the APAC initiative, clients help support those with cerebral palsy by buying their bakery products for their events and engaging in activities with them that involve our team.



**In April 2023, we held a dinner for customers to give them an opportunity to learn about the Zero Waste concept that Marriott has been implementing in some of its restaurants. The concept of zero waste refers to the various ways of minimizing the impact on the environment, such as generating menus that decrease carbon footprints by choosing to source locally. During the dinner, the chef explained where the ingredients came from, highlighting their quality and the fact that purchasing these ingredients was a direct way to support local organic farmers and producers. Inviting our clients to this kind of event gave them a new perspective on how to deliver a sustainable event.**



# DOING OUR PART

BCD M&E's commitment to reducing negative environmental impact is comprehensive and reflected in our Sustainability Framework. Our science-based target commits us to reducing our absolute Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 35% by 2030, from a 2016 base year. As we reinforce our commitment to sustainability, we also commit to helping clients build their own sustainable program initiatives.

We also continue to align with the appropriate partners and organizations that can validate our work. As part of BCD Group, we've received our third consecutive Platinum rating from EcoVadis, the world's largest and most trusted provider of business sustainability ratings.

In terms of operational optimization, in 2022 we received an ISO 20121 certification for our Sustainable Event Management System which recognizes that we have implemented a framework for any type of event or event-related activity to recognize sustainability in all of our key focus areas.

Additionally, BCD M&E's internal, global committee on meeting and event sustainability has developed and continues to refine a number of elements into a "Sustainability Toolkit" to help our clients achieve their sustainability goals. This work has contributed to our ISO 20121 accreditation and includes:

## ISO-certified Carbon Calculator

Our Carbon Emissions Calculator, built by BCD Travel's consultancy arm, Advito, and powered by GATE4 (their ISO-certified carbon emissions calculation methodology), takes a holistic look at meetings and events to determine what levers meeting planners can pull to reduce emissions and the overall environmental impact of an event.

Considering traditional elements, like giveaways and food, the calculator also measures the most important contributor to overall emissions—where attendees come from and how they are getting there. It allows meeting planners to input a wide range of data, from information about the venue to the hotels that attendees are booking, as well as helping planners understand the footprint of their meeting or event, even before the actual event begins.

## Venue Sourcing Scorecard

This includes contracting language that can be incorporated into a venue's contract and a way to assess a venue's compliance with a client's sustainability criteria.

## Event Scorecard & Planning Guide

This is a comprehensive guide of sustainable measures that can be incorporated into all events across all parts of the program from production to planning, agenda to communication, menu selection to destination and waste management. It's also where our 7-R's are incorporated to program elements:

**rethink - refuse - reduce - reuse - repurpose - recycle - report**



## People

“People Development and Support” is one of our key focuses incorporated into the company’s core value and sustainability strategic pillars.

Minor Hotels strives to be a responsible employer providing our workforce, talents and leaders development programs that elevate their capabilities, creating personal and professional growth opportunities. We continue cultivating sustainability mindsets among our employees through community investment and other initiatives focused on education, health, well-being, and environment.

## Planet

Climate change, which has been mainly caused by man-made activities, negatively impacts all life on Earth. As a responsible citizen, Minor has committed to become a “Net-Zero Carbon Organization”, contributing towards the mitigation of climate impacts by adapting its hotels to operate in a decarbonized economy. This commitment drives our operations worldwide to pursue actions towards protecting our planet while tackling climate change.

We have established an approach to “Net-Zero Carbon Organization” by reviewing our carbon inventory and implementing a 4-R approach “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Replace”. European and American properties have reached the Science Based Target to reduce the 20% of carbon emissions by 2030.

With a wide portfolio worldwide, we have a prime responsibility to minimize the impacts of our presence, by reusing and recycling natural resources (such as water and energy) and reducing greenhouse gas discharges, in addition to replacing existing materials with more environmentally-friendly alternatives.

We also support protection on land and below-water biodiversity through long-term conservation initiatives.

# PARTNERS DOING IT RIGHT

**Minor Hotels reinforces its commitment towards environmental, social and cultural conservation. To accomplish this, they have established in-depth policies, procedures, and initiatives:**

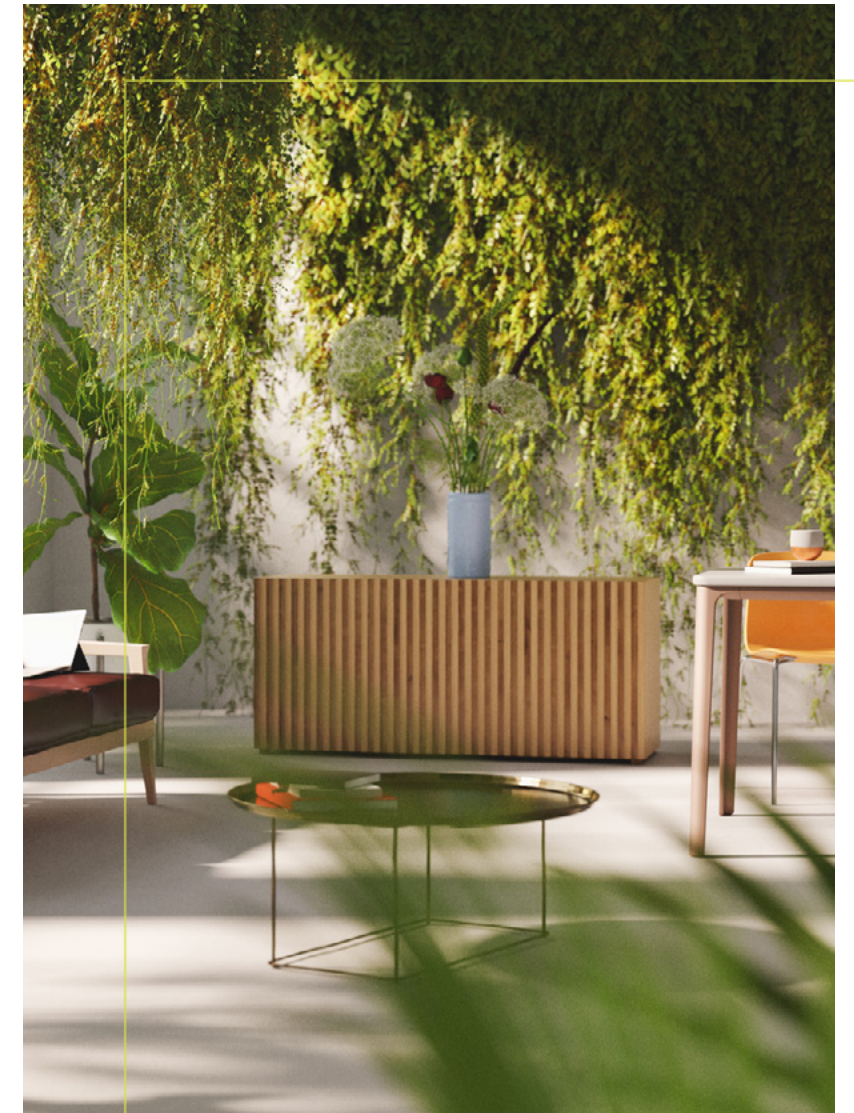
## Sustainable Value Chain

Achieving our sustainable view will only be possible if we involve our key stakeholders in the upstream and downstream value chain: suppliers, partners and customers. These policies are key to the sustainable growth and the competitiveness of our company.

## Achievements 2022

- 30% energy consumed per room sold (22 vs 21)
- 30% carbon emissions per room sold (22 vs 21)
- 58%\* water consumed per room sold (22 vs 21)  
*\*70% portfolio covered*

**MINOR**  
HOTELS



# LOOKING AHEAD

While all regions of the world remain steadfast in their commitment to sustainable practices in the meetings and events industry, they each stand at different junctions in their journey. Globally speaking, the reduction of carbon emissions is still the primary focus, but many clients are still unaware of how this “translates” into planning sustainable meetings. We continue to assist clients in unraveling the complex web of emissions data—with an eye to encourage broad adoption of our carbon footprint calculator as a helpful tool for both education and implementation.

At the end of the day, disseminating the appropriate and relevant education to our clients on the impact of their meetings and events—based on where they are in their own sustainability voyages—is what underlies any successful program, single event or policy. This is especially critical as they take that information forward to their own end users.



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