Introduction to Sustainable Event Standards

Driven by industry professionals seeking clear, uniform definitions of a sustainable event two separate and unique voluntary processes are available to meeting planners, organizers and industry suppliers: BS 8901 the specification for a sustainable event management system, and the Convention Industry Council's APEX Green Meeting and Events Voluntary Standards.

A formal standard is based on the consensus of industry stakeholder opinion, meeting the requirements of an independent standards organization (in the case BSI British Standards and ASTM). Each country has their own standards body, many of which are members of ISO (the International Organization for Standardization).

BS 8901:2007 *Specification for a sustainable event management system with guidance for use*

The current best example, and the first voluntary standard for a sustainable management system for events available to the meetings industry, is BSI British Standards' BS 8901:2007 *Specification for a sustainable event management system with guidance for use*. BS 8901 was developed by a BSI committee comprising of events industry experts. BSI has responsibility for its review and integrity.

BS 8901 is a management system that provides requirements for planning and managing sustainable events of all sizes and types. The standard is applicable to the entire range of events, from large scale conferences and unique events such as the 2012 Olympics, to music festivals and air shows. It is applicable throughout the sector supply chain encompassing venues, organizing companies and industry contracting firms and is aimed at the following groups:

- Event organizers
- Venues
- Organizations and/or individuals in the supply chain.

If these procedures are followed and documented in the planning, onsite and post event phases, the event can earn either self-certification designation, or be eligible to be certified by a 3rd party as a sustainable event.

Although it was originally created for the UK events industry, BS 8901 is being used all around the world by organizations such as Microsoft, MPI, US Green Buildings Council and the 2012 London Olympics.

A revised BS 8901, which takes into account the comments of those already using the standard, is now available for comment, and is expected to be ratified later this year. To comment on the draft of the revised BS 8901 visit www.bsigroup.com/drafts until 31 May 2009

For more information on BS 8901 visit http://www.bsi-global.com/bs8901

APEX

Towards the end of 2009, The Convention Industry Council's APEX/ASTM initiative will release green meeting standards for the meetings/events industry. The standards design team is comprised of the meeting industry standards body, APEX, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's endorsed standards organization. These standards will be vetted through both the APEX and ASTM process. ASTM International is one of the largest voluntary standards development organizations in the world.

The standards are being developed in a consensus basis and vetted throughout the international meetings/events community. The intention behind the standards is for them to compliment existing, relevant certifications and criteria.

The APEX/ASTM standards will be specific, measurable, performance based criteria. They will use a ticksheet and scoring level to gauge performance. They will cover the following 9 areas.

- Accommodation
- Audio/Visual and Production
- Communication
- Destinations
- Exhibits
- Food & Beverage
- Meeting Venue
- On-Site Offices
- Transportation.

The APEX standard is planned to be adopted as the basis for a US Government federal purchasing program focused on environmentally preferable government-run meetings and conferences.

For more information on APEX
http://www.apexsolution.org/green.htm
http://www.conventionindustry.org/aboutcic/pr/pr%202008/pr_070808.htm

Complement and not compete.

It is important to note that the two standards are different in their approach to defining a sustainable event standard. The BS 8901 standard is a management system (similar to ISO 14001) written to inform the process of organizing an event. The APEX standard provides definitions of specific operational actions that comprise a sustainable event. The standards will work well independently or in collaboration as frameworks for sustainable events and sustainable meetings industry businesses.

Apex and BSI have been in communication during the development of the standards. The Green Meeting Industry Council supports both processes.

Don't reinvent the wheel

There are currently other regional green meeting standards in operation or in development around the world. To our knowledge these are not supported by National or International Standards bodies. The GMIC strongly recommends that anyone or any country looking for a standard should first contact BSI and APEX to see these existing programs can fulfil their local needs. A standard takes over 3 years to create and too many standards will confuse buyers and planners, diluting the impact and benefit of the program.

For more information

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