

Hotel Sustainability Basics: Toolkit



Introduction

The Hotel Sustainability Basics ‘The Basics’ are the globally recognised basic sustainability indicators for hotels. Developed by the industry for the industry they represent the 12 actions which are fundamental to hotel sustainability. WTTC together with its partners in developing this initiative is calling on hotel operators, owners, associations and investors around the world to officially support the Basics and work with hotels across their networks to put them in place over the next three years.

The Basics are designed to offer a starting point for all stakeholders, particularly those who are embarking on their sustainability journey. They also help raise awareness of the minimum level of sustainability expected across the global hotel industry.

The criteria have been developed under the auspices of WTTC and through a working group of 11 hotel companies¹, with the support of the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. They have been reviewed, debated and reworked following several rounds of industry consultation so that they truly represent the common denominator and most transversal sustainability actions across the industry.

As an open-source resource, the Basics are available to hotel stakeholders, at company and property level, around the world. They have been deliberately designed to align with existing frameworks and certifications, such as the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance’s Pathway to Positive Hospitality, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council’s (GSTC) hotel criteria, the UNESCO/Expedia Pledge, Travalyst, Booking.com, Google, LQA Sustainability Standards, Forbes Travel Guide Sustainability Standards and the Sustainable Development Goals². By starting with the Basics, a hotel can move forward using any of these frameworks in order to further improve their sustainability performance.

By uniting behind the Basics, the hotel industry can make strengthen sustainability by:

Creating a common narrative for how a hotel gets started on the sustainability journey but cutting through the noise of the many existing sustainability definitions and frameworks to those criteria which are really fundamental

Ensuring consistency across different stakeholder groups in terms of expectations of the industry and how to articulate them

Enabling the advancement of sustainability in brand standards through a common framework which is pre-competitive and industry-endorsed

Engaging the hotel investment and development community so that sustainability can be embedded early on in the investment and development cycle

Why the Basics have been developed

The Travel & Tourism sector is taking important steps towards greater sustainability and net zero operations. Yet, many, especially smaller, stakeholders in the hospitality industry continue to face important challenges in starting their sustainability journeys due to financial and human resource constraints. With around 80% of the sector comprised of SMEs, it is vital to support and empower especially those stakeholders as they embark on their sustainability journeys in an aligned and strategic manner. To reach this vision, the global hotel industry has come together to identify the first crucial steps that all properties can and should take, independently of their size, resources and progress made so far, and thereby raise the bar of sustainability in Travel & Tourism overall.

¹ Accor, Barcelo Hotel Group, Deutsche Hospitality, Huazhu Group Limited, Indian Hotels Company Limited, Jin Jiang Hotels, Louvre Hotels Group, Meliá Hotels International, Minor International, NH Hotel Group, Radisson Hotel Group

² See Appendix 1

Section 1: Hotel Sustainability Basics Criteria

The 'Basics' consist of 12 criteria, grouped into three areas: Management and Efficiency, Planet and People. Of the 12 criteria, hotels need only comply with eight initially, while the others can be committed to and put in place within three years.

Management & Efficiency	1. Measure and Reduce Energy Use 2. Measure and Reduce Water Use 3. Identify and Reduce Waste 4. Measure and Reduce Carbon Emissions	Mandatory from outset
		Should be in place by year 3
Planet	5. Linen reuse program 6. No single use plastic straws or stirrers 7. Replace single use plastic water bottles 8. Replace single use plastic mini toiletry bottles 9. Green cleaning products 10. Vegetarian options	At least one of the three should be in place at the outset, the rest by year 3
		Mandatory from outset with improvement shown by year 3
People	11. Community Benefit 12. Reduce inequalities	Mandatory from outset with improvement shown by year 3

Each criteria has a clear description and further information on the rationale for its inclusion as well as guidance on how it can be done well and, where relevant, links to resources.

Management and Efficiency

The first four indicators require hotels to have robust approaches to measuring and reducing their energy and water consumption, waste and carbon emissions. These are common criteria across most best practices, frameworks and standards. Initiatives to measure and reduce energy and water should be in place from the start, and those to measure and reduce waste and carbon emissions should be in place from year 3.

Criteria 1: Measure and reduce energy use	Mandatory
Measure and take actions to reduce energy consumption. Measure at least once per year, in accordance with industry standards and methodologies.	
Why it is important Energy and other resource use is where the greatest environmental impact for hotels lie. Measurement of performance is critical to determining and driving progress. At around 3-6% of hotel operating costs, energy is the second largest component of operating costs after employment ¹ . Energy also accounts for a large majority of a hotel's carbon emissions. Addressing energy use performance is not just environmentally beneficial but also makes financial sense.	
How it is done well At least once a year, the hotel measures its energy footprint in accordance with recommendations from industry standards and methodologies. For instance: Energy consumption totals (kWh) and intensity (i.e. by floor area or occupied rooms) At a minimum, electricity and energy consumption data is recorded from meter readings and/or invoices. Unit conversion factors (e.g. litres-to-kWh) for various energy sources such as gas and diesel can be referenced from the Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI ⁴) or via online conversion tools. An action plan to reduce energy use over time with clear roles and responsibilities is available, which considers best practice attributes from common industry frameworks. The status of initiatives and processes as well as specifications are tracked over time to show progress and there is a continuous plan for what should be implemented.	

3. Upadhyay & Vadam, 2015

4. <https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/resource/hotel-carbon-measurement-initiative/>

Criteria 2: Measure and reduce water use	Mandatory
Measure and take actions to reduce energy consumption. Measure at least once per year, in accordance with industry standards and methodologies.	
Why it is important On average, water accounts for 10% of hotel utility costs, and with the implementation of sustainable practices, water consumption can be reduced by up to 50% per guest⁵. It is especially important for the long-term sustainability of the travel destination to measure water use and prioritize water conservation in locations facing water scarcity.	
How it is done well At least once a year, the hotel measures its water footprint in accordance with recommendations from industry standards and methodologies. For instance: Water consumption totals (litres) and intensity (i.e. per floor area or per occupied room) For assistance in metrics and methodology for measuring water consumption download the Hotel Water Measurement Initiative Methodology and Calculation Tool from https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/resource/hotel-water-measurement-initiative/. An action plan to reduce water use over time with clear roles and responsibilities is available, which considers best practice attributes from common industry frameworks. By the end of the hotel's third year of participation, the action plan should include a record of local water risk levels and water stewardship actions to mitigate water risks. WRI Aqueduct's free tool can assist with water risk assessment (https://www.wri.org/aqueduct). The status of initiatives and processes as well as specifications are tracked over time to show progress and there is a continuous plan for what should be implemented.	

Criteria 3: Identify and reduce waste	Should be in place by year 3
Identify all waste streams and take actions to reduce waste generation.	
Why it is important Municipal waste generation is expected to reach 3.4 billion metric tons by 2050, yet less than a fifth of our waste is recycled each year⁶. 40% of global food production is wasted each year⁷ while 1 in 9 do not have enough to eat⁸. Food is a major contributor to carbon emissions, and reducing food waste helps contribute to climate action. Tackling waste generation at source and implementing waste diversion efforts will greatly reduce hotel waste footprint and be visible to the guest experience as well as the ability to engage employees. Waste diversion measures can range from reuse to composting, recycling, donation, upcycling, etc.	
How it is done well The hotel has a list of all waste streams within its operations and is able to point out which are the most significant. Examples of waste streams include organic waste, paper, plastic, etc. An action plan to reduce waste over time with clear roles and responsibilities is available, which considers best practice attributes from common industry frameworks. The status of initiatives and processes as well as specifications are tracked over time. By year three, the hotel should be able to measure its waste streams in total and its waste diversion rate at least annually. The WWF Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology is a free resource available from http://hotelkitchen.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HotelWasteMeasurementMethodology_SEP2021_v1.0-1.pdf	

⁵ Hydrofinit, n.d.

⁶ Kaza et al, 2018

⁷ WWF, 2021

⁸ World Food Programme, 2019

Criteria 4: Measure and reduce carbon emissions	Should be in place by year 3
Measure and take actions to reduce carbon emissions. Measure at least once per year, in accordance with industry standards and methodologies.	
Why it is important In line with the Paris Agreement, the hotel industry needs to reduce its carbon emissions by 66% per room by 2030, and by 90% per room by 2050 to ensure that the growth forecast for the industry does not lead to a corresponding increase in carbon emissions (Sustainable Hotel Alliance, 2017). All hotels need to know what their carbon footprint is, what drives it and work toward decreasing it.	
How it is done well At least once a year, the hotel measures its environmental footprint in accordance with industry standards and methodologies. For instance: Carbon footprint totals and intensity (i.e. by floor area or occupied rooms) The Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative (HCMI) Methodology and Calculation tool can help with measuring the carbon footprint of a hotel stay or meeting: https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/resource/hotel-carbon-measurement-initiative/ An action plan to reduce emissions over time with clear roles and responsibilities is available, which considers best practice attributes from common industry frameworks. The status of initiatives and processes as well as specifications are tracked over time to show progress and there is a continuous plan for what should be implemented. Note that carbon emissions reduction can come not only from the energy usage but also sources of energy procured, such as renewables.	

Planet

The Planet section focuses on some fundamental actions to protect the environment. The majority of these are guest facing so that guests can be aware of and engaged in a hotel's sustainability practices. These indicators are common across all standards, frameworks and best practices and feature heavily in the consumer facing frameworks and certifications. Of the six criteria which sit within the 'Planet' section, four are mandatory from the outset. Three are set whereas the fourth can be selected from the three plastics-focused criteria. The other two plastics criteria must be in place by year 3.

Criteria 5: Linen Reuse Program	Mandatory
A bed linen reuse program is implemented by default whereby bed linens are changed every 2 nights or longer	
Why it is important This is a common criterion across all standards, frameworks, and best practices. Laundry operations use a significant amount of water and considerable energy and detergent. Given that bed linens are not as frequently changed at home and are the largest items washed from the guestroom, reducing the frequency of linen change presents a great opportunity for savings in water, energy and detergent use. Guests also have the choice to request for earlier linen change as desired. Towel reuse is also encouraged but bed linen is a priority focus as it is the heaviest and is easier to implement a change in standard operating procedure (SOP) for. It is also less confusing to communicate to housekeepers, unlike towels, since there is only one type of bed linen compared to several types of towels - bath towel, hand towel, face towel, floor towels, etc. Linens are a common denominator for a starting point which can then be enhanced for others like towel reuse, as well as for processes such as opting out of daily room cleaning altogether.	
How it is done well Housekeepers are aware of the program and program is effectively in place based on the guest's choice.	
Criteria 6: No Single-use Plastic Straws and Stirrers	May be selected in year 1 as a plastics initiative, or should be in place by year 3 if not.
Replace single-use plastic straws and stirrers with better alternatives, such as reusable options or options compatible with local waste infrastructure. Consider also eliminating without replacement where feasible.	
Why it is important This is a common criterion across all standards, frameworks, and best practices. Single-use plastic straws and stirrers are some of the top plastic items polluting the ocean, not easily recyclable, and easy to escape waste bins. They are common visible litter in destinations. They are also rarely functionally needed, except for select client groups (e.g. persons with disabilities). Better alternatives are readily available in the markets if required for select client groups or upon guest request. Starting with plastic straws and stirrers (quickest to address) builds awareness and is a first process/specification change that can be applied to other items to go down a plastic free customer journey.	
How it is done well Single-use plastic straws and stirrers are not provided across hotel operations. They are eliminated without replacement as a first priority. Only upon request or for select client groups such as for a person with disability, would the hotel present an alternative that is reusable or compostable (e.g. paper, pasta) as a preference. Hotels should select alternatives based on the total life cycle comparison (sourcing of materials, production methods, waste management infrastructure available, etc.) For instance, synthetic compostable alternatives like bioplastics often require industrial composting conditions, and are therefore more harmful to the environment. Tools and resources to support plastic reduction efforts are available from the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative: https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative/tools-and-resources	

Criteria 7: Replace Single-use Plastic Water Bottles	May be selected in year 1 as a plastics initiative, or should be in place by year 3 if not.
Replace single-use plastic water bottles offered to guests and staff with better alternatives, such as reuse models and options compatible with local waste infrastructure	
Why it is important This is a common criterion across all standards, frameworks, and best practices. Plastic bottles are commonly identified as among the largest sources of plastic waste in a hotel after garbage bags, and more at risk of not being properly disposed of. 8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans each year⁹. A million plastic bottles are discarded every minute¹⁰. Although plastic bottles are recyclable, not enough is being recycled and plastic is not infinitely recyclable. Furthermore, not all markets have adequate recycling facilities. Switching to reusable bottles helps reduce the footprint of buying and discarding things in general. Taking action on plastic bottles builds awareness as it is a common plastic item for hotels and the experience can be applied to other items to go down a plastic free customer journey.	
How it is done well Single-use plastic water bottles are not offered across hotel operations, either to guests or staff. As a first choice, they are replaced by reuse models (e.g. water can be bottled in reusable bottles in-house or by third-party, or be a mix of both) or reusable alternatives (e.g. refillable water bottles are provided that can be refilled from water dispensers in public areas and corridors). If reusable options cannot be implemented, hotels should select alternatives based on life cycle comparison (sourcing of materials, production methods, waste management infrastructure available, etc.). For instance, if a good recycling system is in place, the hotel may consider using 100% recycled plastic, aluminium or tetrapaks. The WTTC & UNEP report “Rethinking single-use plastic products in tourism: impacts, management practices and recommendations” contains a series of decision trees (p23) to support decision-making (https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2021/Rethinking%20Single-Use%20Plastic%20Products%20in%20Travel%20and%20Tourism.pdf?ver=2021-06-15-113544-007). Whether this criterion is implemented well takes into account what is feasible under the local context (e.g. availability of waste infrastructure, local regulatory restrictions, etc). Hotels are encouraged to search for better alternatives and innovative solutions to overcome issues encountered by the end of the third year. Tools and resources to support plastic reduction efforts are available from the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative: https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative/tools-and-resources	

9 Jambeck et al., 2015
10 The Guardian, 2017

Criteria 8: Replace Single-use Plastic Mini Toiletry Bottles	May be selected in year 1 as a plastics initiative, or should be in place by year 3 if not.
Replace single-use plastic mini toiletry bottles across guestrooms, spa, gym and pool with better alternatives, such as Bring Your Own program, reuse models (e.g. bulk liquid toiletry dispensers) and options compatible with local waste infrastructure.	
Why it is important Mini toiletry bottles are a significant waste of both plastic and liquid soap. These bottles are challenging to recycle as half-filled bottles need to be cleaned out and, even when clean and empty, they may still fall through the gaps during recycling due to their small size. Leftover soap in these bottles also goes to waste. Replacing these bottles by bulk dispensers can help to reduce waste, save natural resources and cut costs. Taking action on mini toiletry bottles builds awareness as it is a common plastic item for hotels and the experience can be applied to other items to go down a plastic free journey.	
How it is done well Single-use plastic mini toiletry bottles are not provided across guestrooms, spa, gym and pool. As a first choice, they are replaced by bulk liquid toiletry dispensers, solid shampoo and shower bars (correctly portioned to reduce waste and not wrapped in plastic), or encourage guests to bring their own toiletries. If the above options cannot be implemented, hotels should select alternatives based on life cycle comparison (sourcing of materials, production methods, waste management infrastructure available, etc.) The WTTC & UNEP report “Rethinking single-use plastic products in tourism: impacts, management practices and recommendations” contains a series of decision trees (p24) to support decision-making (https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2021/Rethinking%20Single-Use%20Plastic%20Products%20in%20Travel%20and%20Tourism.pdf?ver=2021-06-15-113544-007). Whether this criterion is implemented well takes into account what is feasible under the local context (e.g. availability of waste infrastructure, local regulatory restrictions, etc.). Hotels are encouraged to search for better alternatives and innovative solutions to overcome issues encountered by the end of the third year. Tools and resources to support plastic reduction efforts are available from the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative: https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/global-tourism-plastics-initiative/tools-and-resources	

Criteria 9: Green Cleaning Products	Mandatory with improvement shown by year 3.
Reduce use of cleaning products with harmful chemicals for human health and the environment. Increase use of certified green cleaning products.	
Why it is important This is a common indicator in standards with a strong environmental focus. Guests typically do not like the thought of toxic chemicals being part of their hotel stay. More importantly, overexposure to harmful chemicals can negatively affect the health of housekeeping staff. If harmful chemicals in cleaning products enter surrounding waterways, they can pose a hazard to aquatic life and water quality, and also result in eutrophication, damaging the attractiveness of the tourism destination. This indicator is also a step toward broader action on sustainable purchasing that is commonly found in sustainability criteria across all industries.	
How it is done well A complete inventory of cleaning products is kept, along with any proof that they do not contain harmful chemicals and/or are certified as environmentally friendly by an internationally or nationally recognised ecolabel (e.g. EU-Ecolabel, Nordic Swan, Green Seal, Cradle2Cradle, etc.). Cleaning products should avoid the following chemicals of concern: 1. Formaldehyde 2. Benzene 3. Heavy metals lead, hexavalent chromium, or selenium; either in the elemental form or compounds 4. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) 5. Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) 6. Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEO) and/or alkylphenol derivatives (APD) 7. EDTA (Ethylene diamine tetraacetate and its salts) and DTPA (Diethylenetriamine pentaacetate) 8. Phthalates 9. 2-butoxyethanol 10. Quarternary ammonium salts that are not readily degradable 11. Organic chlorine compounds and hypochlorites 12. Phosphate, phosphonate, phosphonic acid or phosphoric acid 13. Ozone Depleting Compounds 14. Detergents containing more than 6% by weight of VOCs with a boiling point lower than 150°C If the hotel is not using all green cleaning products, it should be able to demonstrate that there has been an increase in use of green cleaning products from the previous year based on inventory records. An exception for use of strong chemical cleaning products is allowed in the case of heavy soiling, e.g. in kitchens or bathrooms, and housekeeping staff should receive training on proper handling of cleaning products and equipment as well as situations where hazardous waste or other health hazards exist.	

Criteria 10: Vegetarian Options	Mandatory with improvement shown by year 3.
Vegetarian menu options are available for every course (e.g. appetizer, main dish, dessert) and every section (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner). If no F&B is offered, provide guests with information on vegetarian options at hotel concessions and/or in restaurants in the local vicinity, where available.	
Why it is important Food production makes up one third of global emissions and meat accounts for over half of that¹¹. Market demand for vegan food is growing strongly and is expected to be worth over US\$ 22 billion in 2025¹². Vegan menu options are also encouraged, but at a minimum vegetarian options should be available. It is important that a choice is available in any situation - for every course (including main dish) for all sections (including breakfast, lunch and dinner), and also for room service so that guests who are vegetarians have a consistent offering. While not all hotels have restaurants, all humans need to eat, and this helps build awareness as well as extend to areas where the hotel can inform guests and staff to help support this. This is also a good first step toward healthier and more sustainable food sourcing (e.g. organic, local and seasonal), the introduction of onsite vegetable and fruit gardens which could reduce transport emissions, and the introduction of initiatives to reduce food waste and associated emissions	
How it is done well Hotel-owned F&B outlets and offerings (e.g. room service) provide vegetarian menu options for every course and every section (breakfast/lunch/dinner). Vegetarian options should be labelled clearly for easy identification by guests. If there are no hotel-owned F&B outlets and offerings, hotel concessions should offer vegetarian menu options. Should no F&B options be available on property, hotel staff (e.g. concierge) are aware of and provides guests with information on vegetarian food options and restaurants in the local vicinity	

¹¹ Xu et al., 2021

¹² Statista, 2021

People

The People section focuses on actions that hotels should take in order to ensure they are making a positive contribution to the communities in which they are located. As each locality is unique in terms of its community demographics, infrastructure and needs, these two mandatory criteria are deliberately broad in focus and provide flexibility for hotels to identify where they can take action which will be most impactful. Tangible progress and expansion of programs should be shown by year 3.

Criteria 11: Community Benefit	Mandatory with improvement shown by year 3.
Hotel contributes to the community at minimum once per year. Guests are offered opportunities to participate (via volunteering, tours, financial or in-kind donation).	
Why it is important The positive engagement of the community is important for the sustainability of Travel & Tourism business. In addition, many guests want to make a positive contribution to the places they visit. These opportunities for guest participation will help build awareness and understanding of sustainability issues and the efforts implemented by the hotel. This is a first step toward stronger guest engagement on sustainability as well as positive community impact. A broad definition enables various topics to be addressed in the context of the local community and destination. The focus here is on community impact (e.g. supporting local infrastructure and social community development). To promote guest appreciation and preservation of local natural and cultural heritage, hotels can provide relevant information and interpretation, and explain appropriate tourist behaviour. This experience can then be extended to raising awareness of potential negative impacts of irresponsible or unsustainable tourism such as human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and environmental degradation from improper tourist behaviour.	
How it is done well The hotel demonstrates efforts to communicate the programs supported and the participation opportunities available. Guest feedback is obtained and reviewed to improve hotel's sustainability offerings. Potential partner organizations (e.g. charities, NGOs, social enterprises, etc.) are assessed on their suitability and reliability prior to partnership. If information and interpretation of natural and cultural heritage, and appropriate tourist behaviour have been shared, there is documentary evidence (e.g. via printed or digital channels).	

Criteria 12: Reduce Inequalities	Mandatory with improvement shown by year 3.
Identify best practices and implement at minimum one initiative to reduce inequalities in employment within the hotel team or the broader community via supply chain choices.	
Why it is important This criterion is aligned with UN SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities” and GSTC B6 Equal Opportunity. Reducing inequalities is inherently associated with embracing diversity and promoting inclusion of groups at risk of discrimination. This is a theme that has come to the forefront of ESG and sustainability issues. The topic is important for hotels where diversity may be common for line-level staff but not for management. Customers are diverse also. Reducing inequalities is broadly tied to several areas of important principles such as anti-harassment, accessibility, equal opportunity, and anti-discrimination. This criterion enables a hotel to identify issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion, as best practices for this topic begin with dialogue followed by training. In addition, the hotel will be more equipped to handle issues with its workforce, community, and customer base. Beyond direct operations, hotels can have a wider impact on reducing inequalities through their purchases. Hotels can support diverse and local suppliers and increase purchase of ethically produced, fair trade goods and services to contribute to the reduction of inequalities in the broader community.	
How it is done well There is a record of activities held (e.g. meetings and dialogues, a plan) to identify best practices in reducing inequalities within the hotel's workforce and/or supply chain. There is a record of best practices that are planned for implementation and at least one implemented initiative to reduce inequalities within the hotel's workforce and/or supply chain. Equal opportunities for the hotel's workforce relate to the offering of employment, training and promotion opportunities, irrespective of the person's age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.	

Section 2: Using the Hotel Sustainability Basics Criteria

The Hotel Sustainability Basics criteria are open source and freely available for any hotel company or property to adopt. They are intended to form the first step in a sustainability journey and can then be expanded on to follow more ambitious pathways as set out by, for example 'Pathway to Positive Hospitality' or the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

Becoming an official 'supporter' of the Basics

Only together will we be able to contribute to achieving the potential of T&T as a significant driver of sustainable growth. By officially supporting the Basics, you are strengthening our collective call for an inclusive, more sustainable development in the hospitality industry.

Hotel groups, brands, operators or owners that represent a number of hotels can become official, WTTC recognized supporters of the Basics and take steps to roll them out across their portfolios. Destinations or hotel associations can similarly become official supporters of the Basics and promote them to their hotel communities and members. Entities that want to become official supporters of the Basics can apply directly to WTTC: **sustainability@wttc.org**

Using the Basics at property level

Hotel properties can dive into the Basics using the guidance in this document alongside the 'Getting Started' section of this document.

Green Lodging Trends Report

The Green Lodging Trends Report is an annual survey of sustainability best practices in hotel properties around the world. From 2022 onwards, the Basics criteria will be embedded in the survey. This will establish a baseline for the current uptake of the criteria and, through additional questions relating to specific actions, will establish the best practises which should be pursued to support them. Properties will be able to track their progress and those which complete the survey will receive a bespoke benchmarking report where they can see how their practices compare with peer hotels.

For more information on the Green Lodging Trends Report visit:
<http://greenview.sg/services/green-lodging-trends-report/>

Verification of the Basics Criteria

The Basics Criteria have been designed so that a hotel anywhere in the world can pick them up and get started on their sustainability journey. In due course, more information on a potential verification process will be made available by WTTC so that those properties and companies that wish to have their participation in the Hotel Sustainability Basics initiative verified independently can do so. This would be a first step towards obtaining more ambitious certifications, such as those accredited by GSTC, in the future.

Section 3: Getting started

Sustainability is a journey and through adoption of the Basics it is a journey that hotels can take together. This section sets out some simple steps which can be taken at property level to get started.

1 Identify Your Sustainability Team.

Identify staff members who would need to be engaged to undertake each Basics criteria. Sustainability efforts are typically driven by a dedicated Sustainability Team that has representation from all functional departments as sustainability is applicable to all areas and often requires cross-departmental collaboration. For smaller operations, sustainability efforts may be led by a Champion or Ambassador with participation from specific representatives across the departments.

2 Designate Clear Roles and Responsibilities.

For accountability, ensure that at least one person is in charge of getting the Basics criteria implemented. The day-to-day role of the person-in-charge would preferably correspond with the criteria topic addressed for greater effectiveness and efficiency in rolling out actions (e.g. Housekeeping departmental head and #9 Green Cleaning Products, Chefs/F&B team and #10 Vegetarian Options).

3 Discuss the Basics Criteria.

Find out what your hotel is already doing and determine which issues are the most important and relevant to your hotel, and easiest to address. This includes ensuring that staff involved understand well the rationale for each criteria and how it is done well. In the first year of embarking on the Basics, eight criteria need to be addressed at minimum, including:

- 1 Management and Efficiency (2): #1 Energy and #2 Water
- 2 Planet (4): #5 Linen Reuse, #6/7/8 Single-use Plastic (any 1 of 3), #9 Green Cleaning Products and #10 Vegetarian Options
- 3 People (2): #11 Community Benefit and #12 Reduce Inequalities

4 Identify and Quantify Energy and Water Use.

Obtain and record your energy and water consumption data from invoices or meter readings. Refer to the [Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative](#) (HCMI) methodology for the energy types that need to be included and unit conversion factors that are relevant to your hotel (e.g. converting litres of diesel to kWh). Refer to the [Hotel Water Measurement Initiative](#) (HWMI) methodology and use the calculation tool to assist your hotel in quantifying your water footprint.

5 Identify and Quantify Waste and Carbon.

Proceed to add measurement and reduction of waste and carbon by the end of the third year that your hotel participates in the Basics. Refer to the HCMI methodology and use the calculation tool to quantify your carbon footprint. Refer to [Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology](#) (HWMM) to find out how to collect, report and validate waste data, including that of food waste.

6 Research on the Criteria and Associated Best Practices, Approaches, and Resources.

There are many ways to improve a hotel's energy, water, waste and carbon performance (Basics #1-4), benefit the community and reduce inequalities (Basics #11 and #12). Check out industry standards and frameworks such as [GSTC Criteria](#) for guidelines to incorporating related processes for continuous improvement and [Travalyst's Sustainability Attributes](#) for direct, applicable best practices or actions that the hotel can take.

7 Establish an Action Plan.

Select and prioritize sustainability actions that are most relevant and feasible for your hotel and plan out the implementation process, which should include clear roles and responsibilities for staff, and a review and follow-up process for continuous improvement. Refer to the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance's [Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality](#) to identify how a hotel owner and operator can advance your sustainability action plan over four stages to achieve net positive impacts.

8 Provide Tools and Training to Staff.

Incorporate newly required actions (e.g. linen reuse) into Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and conduct training to help staff understand why sustainability is important and how it would be embedded in their day-to-day responsibilities. Conduct feedback sessions with staff to improve processes.

- 9 Engage Guests, Suppliers and Local Community Partners.**
Identify ways to motivate guests and suppliers to participate in your sustainability efforts to fulfil the Basics. Refer to relevant **GSTC Criteria** under the pillars of Socioeconomic impacts and Cultural impacts and **Travalyst's Sustainability Attributes** for Destination & Community for best practice attributes that could be conducted.
- 10 Monitor and Review Progress During Hotel Team Meetings.**
Meet at least annually, and to be more effective, monthly or quarterly to monitor and discuss progress on each criterion that is being addressed by your hotel.
- 11 Communicate Your Sustainability Program and Progress Publicly.**
Accurate promotion of your sustainability efforts and transparent communication of sustainability progress are crucial to gaining consumer support, trust and confidence. Ensure that your sustainability statements are based on actual implementations and data records.
- 12 Improve Your Sustainability Program and Fulfil All Basics Criteria.**
Obtain feedback on your sustainability program from stakeholders (e.g. survey staff, guests, and suppliers) and expand your sustainability program from fulfilling a minimum of eight Basics criteria in your first year to completing all twelve criteria by the end of your third year.

Appendix 1: Alignment with other frameworks

The chart below indicates where Hotel Sustainability Basics criteria support directly or as an initial step, progress towards criteria from other frameworks.

The frameworks reviewed include:

1. LQA Sustainability Standards
2. Forbes Travel Guide Sustainability Standards
3. Travalyst
4. Booking.com
5. Google
6. UNESCO/Expedia Pledge
7. GSTC
8. Pathway to Positive Hospitality
9. Sustainable Development Goals.

Indicator not relevant	Criteria aligned	Alignment via GSTC
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#		LQA	Forbes	Travalyst	Booking.com	Google	UNESCO/Expedia Pledge	GSTC	Pathway to Positive	SDGs
1	Measure and reduce energy use									
2	Measure and reduce water use									
3	Identify and reduce waste									
4	Measure & reduce carbon emissions									
5	Linen reuse program									
6	No SUP straws /stirrers									
7	Replace SUP water bottles									
8	Replace SUP mini toiletry bottles									
9	Green cleaning products									
10	Provide vegetarian options									
11	Community benefit									
12	Reduce inequalities									

Notes:

- Google has a set of prescribed criteria but also recognises hotels which are GSTC-certified. So while Criteria #9, #11 and #12 are not represented by the Google framework, they are within GSTC.
- The Pathway to Positive Hospitality is currently only focused on environmental elements and as such the 'People' criteria are not relevant.

Appendix 2: References and Sources

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Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions (Technical)

1 Why have 12 criteria been selected?

The 12 criteria have been selected following an intense process of industry review and based on their significance as actions which represent a base level of sustainability activity that all hotels should be undertaking. They represent both back of house and guest facing activities, both of which are critical to making real sustainability progress, and include both environmental and social aspects. During the review process it became clear that reducing the number of criteria would compromise the robustness of the initiative, by eliminating some key and fundamental actions, but a phased approach has been suggested to allow time for the full set to be implemented. Furthermore, any more would dilute the focus and overwhelm those trying to put them into practice.

2 Why are some mandatory from the outset?

It is recognised that the 12 criteria although basic in nature, will still take time and effort to implement particularly in hotels which are starting out on their sustainability journey. For this reason, 8 of the criteria should be in place within the first year of implementation, and the remaining 4 by year three. There is flexibility in terms of which criteria hotels may choose to prioritise for year

3 Why the heavy focus on environmental indicators?

Ten of the 12 criteria are actions related to the environment. This is because, for hotels in the initial stages of sustainability actions and planning, regardless of hotel type or location, getting to grips with environmental impact is vital. That said, the social elements of sustainability are also an extremely important part of any sustainability program so should be built into consideration from the outset.

4 Why are no specific actions listed for the action plans for energy, water, waste and carbon?

Each hotel should develop its own action plan based on its current processes and performance, and the specific requirements of its building and location. For this reason there is no stipulated action to be taken. However, the most and least common practices in each region will be identified through the 2022 Green Lodging Trends Report and further guidance given on where hotels can start out with their action planning in each area.

5 Why is measurement a focus for energy, water and carbon but not waste?

It is recognised that measurement of waste in a hotel is a challenging undertaking. Guidance is provided by the WWF Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology, however establishing the relevant systems and processes is deemed to be more advanced than 'basic'. As such, for waste, the initial focus should be to identify waste streams and take actions to address them directly.

6 Why is only a linen reuse program required, rather than one which includes towels?

In many hotels a reuse program which includes towels and linen can be implemented. However, it is recognised that for a starter program linen is more simple in terms of the items involved and how to communicate to staff. Towels come in varying sizes and uses (eg hand towel, bath towel, swimming towel etc) and ensuring correct implementation of a reuse program can be complex.

7 Why are there three indicators focusing on single use plastics alone?

Public awareness of single use plastics is high and many companies have commitments in place to reduce or eliminate them. By separating them out into three criteria (only one of which needs to be in place by year 1) hotels following the Hotel Sustainability Basics (the Basics) can prioritise the area of single use plastics which are most relevant to their context, or where most progress has been made already.

8 Why does the criteria focus on vegetarian food not vegan, and why is there no focus on local sourcing and seasonal produce?

Reduction of meat consumption is a key means for hotels to reduce their carbon footprint, and providing vegetarian options is a first step to this, as well as being an important element of customer choice. While local sourcing and seasonal produce are important considerations, defining 'local' and 'seasonal' is highly context based and beyond the scope of the 'basic' criteria.

9 Why are the social indicators so broad?

As recognised above, social sustainability should be a key part of any hotel's sustainability plans from the outset. However, the needs of local communities and the workforce will differ from hotel to hotel, as will the opportunities for specific actions to be taken. For this reason, the criteria are broad and allow a high level of flexibility for a property to define its own actions in this area. The 'Basics' do require that measurable progress takes place between year 1 and year 3, and the expectation is that programs evolve and expand over time.

10 Why is green transportation not covered?

Offering or promoting green transportation options to guests is an element of sustainable practice, however it is not recognised as being one of a small set of fundamental criteria to be adopted as a first step. Guests may find their own information on public transport easily, and in some cases a property's location may mean public transport is not an option. Supporting or providing 'green' transport such as eco-friendly vehicles would come as part of a more advanced sustainability program.

11 Why is a green housekeeping program not included?

The definition of a 'green' housekeeping program is broad and can be interpreted in several ways. A green housekeeping program can be seen as an evolution of a linen reuse program, requiring more complexity in Standard Operating Procedures and a more complex communication strategy with guests. As such it is not deemed to be a 'basic' action to be taken, but something to be considered as a next step.

12 Why are the expectations different between the first and third years of engagement in the 'Basics'?

Sustainability is an ongoing process of improvement, and this is reflected in the structure of the 'Basics'. Some hotels may be in a position to have all 12 criteria in place in year 1, but others may face challenges based on local context (eg availability of replacement items for plastics) which will require more time to solve.

13 How is the risk of greenwashing mitigated, given that the 'Basics' only represent the very first steps a hotel should be taken?

The Hotel Sustainability Basics is not a certification scheme, it is an open source resource for hotels and hotel companies to use in order to get started on sustainability. It provides the common denominator of actions that hotels should be taking at the minimum in order to ensure that their operations can be sustainable in the long term. In due course, those implementing the 'Basics' may choose that their compliance with these minimum criteria is verified, and as such show that they have embarked upon their sustainability journey.

14 What happens once a hotel has the 'Basics' in place?

A hotel which is complying with the basic criteria should then continue its sustainability journey using one of the many resources or certification schemes available. The Sustainable Hospitality Alliance's Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality provides an excellent roadmap to be followed and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)'s criteria for hotels provide the gold standard in terms of how sustainability should be delivered. Many of the online platforms have developed their own criteria, standards and certifications (Travalyst, Booking.com, Google among others) which may also be followed.



The World Travel & Tourism Council is the global authority on the economic and social contribution of Travel & Tourism. WTTC promotes sustainable growth for the Travel & Tourism sector, working with governments and international institutions to create jobs, to drive exports and to generate prosperity. Council Members are the Chairs, Presidents and Chief Executives of the world's leading private sector Travel & Tourism businesses.

For further information, please visit:

[WTTC.org/Sustainability](https://www.wttc.org/Sustainability)

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