

ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE & REGENERATIVE EVENTS: A GUIDE FOR ASSOCIATIONS & PCOs

Prepared for Radisson Hotel Group by GDS-Movement



Radisson Hotel Group

As a global leader in responsible hospitality, Radisson Hotel Group is committed to supporting associations, event organisers, and destination partners in delivering meetings and events that are not only successful but also sustainable, inclusive, and regenerative. We recognise that the transition toward responsible event design depends on strong collaboration between destinations, suppliers, and the wider industry ecosystem. Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) are uniquely positioned to facilitate this progress by providing the infrastructure, tools, and expertise required to advance sustainability in practical and measurable ways.

Across destinations, associations are increasingly expected to demonstrate responsible practices, meaningful legacy, and consistency across events. This report brings together insights from GDS-Index destinations where Radisson Hotel Group operates, to explore how collaboration between destinations, venues, and accommodation partners can simplify this challenge – translating sustainability frameworks and local expertise into practical delivery for association events held across regions.

We remain committed to transparency, measurable action, and continuous improvement, and are proud to collaborate with associations and destinations shaping the future of sustainable and regenerative events.

- Inge Huijbrechts, Chief Sustainability and Security Officer, Radisson Hotel Group



GDS-Movement

Destinations play a pivotal role in accelerating the transition toward sustainable and regenerative events. Through the GDS-Index, we benchmark and guide cities as they measure, understand, and enhance their sustainability performance. This work provides associations and PCOs with credible, comparative data and connects them with DMOs, CVBs, and suppliers, such as Radisson Hotel Group, who are committed to delivering responsible, high-impact events.

Strong collaboration between suppliers and destinations enables the creation of events that generate meaningful social and environmental value. I hope this Report supports your efforts to leverage destination expertise and the GDS-Index framework to elevate your sustainability journey and deliver events that leave a lasting legacy.

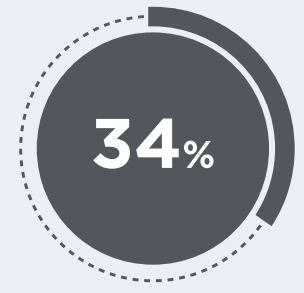
- Guy Bigwood, CEO & Chief Changemaker, GDS-Movement

HOW ASSOCIATIONS TURN SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORKS INTO REAL-WORLD EVENTS

Across the association landscape, a persistent attitude-behaviour gap continues to influence the adoption of sustainable event practices.¹ This imbalance highlights the need for stronger structures, clearer data, and more proactive collaboration between associations and destination partners.



INTENTION



ACTION

⚠️ Only 3% report having an advanced sustainability programme

¹The State of Sustainability in Associations: ICCA/Destination Canada 2025

Indeed, associations repeatedly told us they want fewer complications and more confidence: confidence that sustainability actions are credible, that suppliers are aligned, and that hosts can guide them through the process. This insight underscores the value of working with Radisson Hotel Group and GDS-Index destinations, where frameworks and certifications remove uncertainty and reduce procurement risk.

The insights presented in this report are drawn from an analysis of GDS-Index destinations where Radisson Hotel Group operates properties. They were first shared during a session held at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Grand Place Brussels on 5 December 2025, attended by more than 30 representatives from the hotel, association, Professional Conference Organiser (PCO), CVB, and venue sectors. This dialogue reinforced the importance of destination benchmarking and the critical role that structured sustainability frameworks play in guiding all stakeholders toward more impactful event strategies.

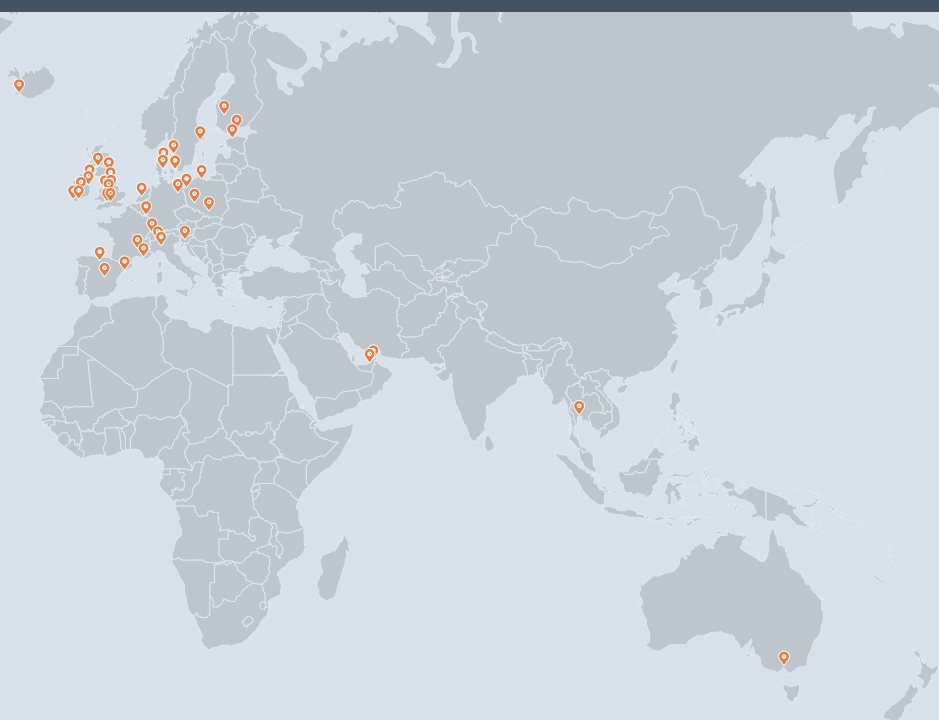


THE GDS INDEX TOWARDS REGENERATIVE EVENTS

Radisson Hotel Group properties

42

GDS-Index destinations



What is the GDS-Index

The GDS-Index is the leading global benchmarking and performance improvement programme for destination sustainability. It assesses how destinations manage and advance their environmental, social, supplier, and governance practices through a robust methodology built on 76 qualitative and quantitative indicators.

These indicators are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the GSTC Destination Criteria, providing destinations with a comprehensive framework for evaluating policy, performance, stakeholder engagement, and the sustainability of the visitor economy.

GDS-Index: What Do We Benchmark?

City Environmental Performance 	City Social Performance 	Supplier Performance 	Destination Management 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate, Energy and Emissions • Circularity and Waste • Water • Air Quality • Transportation • Biodiversity • Alignment with tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDGs Alignment • Corruption • Personal safety • Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity • Health, Safety, and Wellness • Accessibility • Resident Engagement • Funding Mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotels • Airport • Agencies (PCOs & DMCs) • Restaurants • Venues • Attractions • Academia • Tourism and event businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination Strategy • Governance and Reporting • Policy and Certification • Capacity Building • Impact Measurement • Marketing and Communications • Diversity, Equity & Inclusion • Mobility • Climate Action

Co-created by destinations for destinations: 76 qualitative and quantitative criteria
 Informed and closely-aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and to the GSTC Destination Criteria.
 For more details visit: www.gds.earth/index



GDS-Index destinations demonstrating strong and continuously improving **sustainability performance**



The ability for associations to select locations that align with their **environmental** and **social values**



Destinations that actively measure and report their **sustainability performance**

Since the GDS-Index also functions as an improvement framework, participating destinations are often among the most advanced in sustainable development, helping associations and PCOs pick places where their events have higher chances of being delivered responsibly and to a high standard.

How Associations and PCOs better collaborate with Destinations on Sustainability

Data insights from the GDS-Index show that DMOs and CVBs already offer a wide range of tools—from certified supplier networks and sustainability guides to mobility solutions and legacy programmes. These destination resources are reinforced by the capabilities of hotel and venue partners such as Radisson Hotel Group, whose certified properties and operational standards strengthen the broader supplier ecosystem.

By understanding and applying these destination and vendor resources, associations and PCOs can more easily design responsible, high-impact events in alignment with their sustainability goals.

Ask for Help

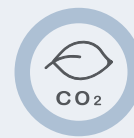
CVBs and DMOs serve as strategic partners for associations and PCOs seeking to embed sustainability into their event planning processes. Their role extends far beyond destination promotion: they act as conveners, knowledge brokers, and facilitators of local systems that support sustainable event delivery. By engaging CVBs at the earliest stages of planning, associations can integrate destination-specific insights directly into their frameworks, including the ability to embed sustainability requirements into their RFPs. Also, request destination guides, toolkits, and legacy-planning resources that clarify expectations and provide practical implementation pathways.



86% — GDS-Index destinations with Radisson Hotels share sustainability information in their RFP responses and sales materials



100% — Provide sustainability tools and manuals



83% — Communicate to event organisers how they can reduce the carbon impact of their events

For associations, collaboration with destinations is most effective when local sustainability strategies are matched by consistent delivery standards at venue and accommodation level. When hotels operate within recognised frameworks and share comparable data, destination guidance becomes actionable — allowing associations to apply the same principles across multiple host cities without reinventing their approach each time.

Marseille: Sustainability Procurement Policy:

To ensure social and environmental factors are taken into consideration during procurement. They also ensure long-lasting relations with vendors as well as committing to take social and environmental impacts during the purchase process.



Marseille
France

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Dubai: Sustainable Events Guide.

This is specifically for large-scale events so that they yield economic, social and environmental impacts. Includes practical tips on waste management, energy use etc. It also encourages event organisers to engage on integrated destination-wide communications campaign, #MyDubai.



Dubai
UAE

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Ask about Certified Suppliers

Certified suppliers form an essential component of a sustainable event ecosystem. The GDS-Index data shows that 59% of hotel rooms in destinations hosting Radisson Hotels are third-party certified, alongside 43% of PCOs and 74% of major congress venues. These certifications reduce procurement risk and help associations demonstrate compliance with international standards.

Best Practice Example — Radisson Hotel Group: Certified Supplier & Sustainability Reporting Ecosystem

- Radisson Hotel Group has built a robust, transparent supply-chain and sustainability framework that associations can rely upon to support ESG-compliant events. As of 2024, **58% of RHG's hotel portfolio** is either verified under the “Hotel Sustainability Basics” standard or holds a third-party eco-label such as Green Key.
- Under the “Think Planet” pillar of its 2024 Responsible Business Report, Radisson Hotel Group reports a **33% reduction** in carbon emissions per square meter and a 21% reduction in energy footprint per occupied room compared to the 2019 baseline.
- This demonstrates that the group applies measurable environmental performance standards across its properties and regularly tracks and reports on resource use, emissions, and energy efficiency.
- For associations planning events, this means that selecting a Radisson Hotel Group property provides a high-confidence baseline: certified operations, audited environmental performance, and documented sustainability metrics.
- By relying on Radisson Hotel Group's certified hotels and their reporting, associations and PCOs can streamline procurement, fulfill ESG requirements, and integrate compliant, transparent supplier partners into their event supply chain — reducing risk and strengthening their own sustainability reporting.
- For associations, the true value of Radisson Hotel Group's sustainability achievements lies in their consistency: regardless of the destination, organisers can rely on a uniform, certified, and transparent sustainability baseline that reduces risk and simplifies decision-making.





Explore Social Impact and Legacy Opportunities

Destination-led legacy initiatives allow associations and PCOs to create positive societal impact aligned with their missions. GDS-Index data reveals that many destinations facilitate food donation programmes, surplus material redistribution, partnerships with social organisations, and carbon offsetting mechanisms.

By collaborating with CVBs and DMOs, associations can design legacy strategies that integrate local community needs with global objectives. These frameworks support outcomes such as knowledge transfer, capacity building, policy advancement, and community investment.



74% of GDS-Index Destinations with Radisson Hotels provide a donation programme for food



62% provides a donation programme for surplus event materials



74% Provides a list of organisations that offer social support programmes and volunteering opportunities for event participants and visitors



64% Shares a carbon-offsetting programme

Copenhagen Legacy Lab partners with international associations and local stakeholders to build strategic legacy programmes for congresses and events, using a 7-step methodology to define goals, engage local stakeholders, co-create initiatives like public-health screenings.



Copenhagen
Denmark

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Singapore MICE Event Legacy Toolkit, includes case studies, guidance for sustainable practices and helps embed community engagement, environmental responsibility and legacy-orientated value creation from planning all the way through impact measurement.



Singapore

[Explore the Full Story](#)



Use Mobility and Accessibility incentives at Events

Mobility systems play a pivotal role in attendee experience and carbon reduction. Data from GDS-Index destinations shows that 86% provide low-carbon mobility guidance, and many offer free or discounted public transport solutions. Integrating these tools into communications enhances accessibility and supports behavioural change.

Public Transport Incentives



45%

of GDS-Index Destinations with Radisson Hotels offer free or discounted public transport for **all** convention and congress visitors

64%

offer free or discounted public transport for **selected** conventions or congresses



Basel provides free public transport cards to all visitors, enabling seamless and sustainable travel throughout the city. This initiative is widespread in most Swiss destinations.



Basel
Switzerland

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Glasgow actively promotes low-carbon mobility options such as walking, cycling, and public transport for event delegates. This is part of the city's commitment to net zero and Active Travel Strategy.



Glasgow
Scotland

[Explore the Full Story](#)



Use Subvention and Financial Incentives

Subvention programmes represent more than financial aid; they function as holistic support mechanisms that enable sustainable and impactful events. While 77% of destinations offer subvention, only a subset provides integrated support packages that include sustainability guidance, legacy planning, or partnership facilitation.²



The global survey by Conferli, #MEET4IMPACT, and the GDS-Movement highlights that those destinations that **go beyond** traditional economic indicators*



20% offer fully integrated support packages (e.g., sustainability roadmaps, legacy plans)



29% facilitate partnerships between event organisers and local stakeholders

Associations and PCOs can negotiate sustainability-linked subvention packages to gain access to structured planning tools, impact measurement frameworks, and stakeholder coordination led by CVBs. Combined with Radisson Hotel Group's transparent reporting systems, these resources allow associations to demonstrate robust, data-driven outcomes.

Berlin offers financial support for meetings and events that demonstrate clear sustainable practices, encouraging organisers to adopt environmentally responsible strategies. The funding model rewards actions such as low-carbon mobility options, waste-reduction plans, and responsible sourcing, ensuring that public investment directly supports greener event delivery. The subsidy is of €25 per in-person attendee for a one-day meeting (minimum 50 participants), helping planners integrate sustainable solutions while supporting the local ecosystem.



Berlin
Germany

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Lyon provides dedicated helpdesks that assist organisers in identifying and coordinating local partnership opportunities, strengthening community engagement and resource efficiency.









Lyon
France

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²Data from Global survey by Conferli, #MEET4IMPACT, and the GDS-Movement: The Insiders' Perspective, Subvention as a catalyst for sustainable and impactful transformation in the Business Events Industry, September 2025

The following checklist brings together practical considerations shared by destinations, venues, and accommodation partners. It is designed to help associations structure conversations, evaluate partners, and apply sustainability principles more consistently across their event portfolios.

A practical guide to responsible event planning for associations	
 Integrate sustainability requirements into your RFP	 Ask for the GDS-Index in your RFP; this will save you a lot of time assessing a destination's sustainability efforts!
 Choose venues that hold valid sustainability certifications	 Request destination guides, toolkits, and legacy-planning resources
 Ask about specific transport incentives that you can offer your participants	 Enquire about available funding and support for sustainable events

Delivering on these priorities requires a partner designed specifically for association events.

This is how Radisson Hotel Group supports associations through its *Association Signature Events* proposition.

Association Signature Events by Radisson Hotel Group

How Radisson Hotel Group supports associations

<p>Flexible value</p> <p>Radisson Hotel Group offers competitive rates for accommodation and events, combined with flexible booking options that allow associations to adjust requirements as plans evolve.</p>	<p>A global hotel network</p> <p>With a strong international footprint, Radisson Hotel Group provides associations with strategic locations and adaptable meeting spaces, supported by consistent standards across destinations.</p>	<p>Inclusion by default</p> <p>Radisson Hotel Group properties are designed to support accessible and inclusive events, accommodating delegates with mobility, hearing or vision impairments and specific access requirements.</p>
<p>Responsible partner</p> <p>Many Radisson Hotel Group association properties are third-party certified for sustainability, and the carbon footprint of association events is automatically compensated, supporting responsible event delivery.</p>	<p>Dedicated professionals</p> <p>Associations benefit from dedicated event professionals and a single point of contact, ensuring efficient coordination, local expertise and stress-free delivery from planning to execution.</p>	<p>Radisson Rewards</p> <p>Every association event earns Radisson Rewards points and benefits, allowing loyalty to be recognised and tracked across multiple events and destinations.</p>

A trusted partner for associations – delivering Signature Events with flexibility, consistency and responsibility.

CREDIT

The information presented in this report was collected during the session Translating Strategy into Practice: Inspiration for Association Events held at the Radisson Collection Hotel, Grand Place Brussels on 5 December 2025 and brought together more than 30 representatives from the hotel, association, PCO, CVB, and venue sectors. The session was co-hosted with the European Society of Association Executives as well as Copenhagen Convention Bureau. This report was written by Antonia Alomar from the GDS-Movement. Design and editing were provided by Radisson Hotels



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HOTEL GROUP

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RADISSON
COLLECTION

Radisson **RED**

Radisson

RED
Radisson

RADISSON
Individuals.

art'otel

P
PARK
PLAZA

park inn
by Radisson

COUNTRY
INNS & SUITES
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REWARDS

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HOTELS

RADISSON
MEETINGS