

# Determining the sustainability of hotels in your supply chain

## Introduction

Organisations globally are increasingly focused on understanding the sustainability impacts of their supply chains, including hotels used for business travel and meetings and events.

The hospitality industry is on a journey to become more sustainable. Hotels around the world are at different stages; many are just starting, others are making progress and some are leading the way.

This document is intended to provide guidance to organisations looking to assess the sustainability of hotels in their supply chain. It provides insight on:

- the type of questions that help determine sustainability of hotels
- where they are best directed to ensure the highest quality responses are received

This guidance has been created with input from member companies of the Alliance and external experts<sup>1</sup>.

## What are the most material sustainability issues in hospitality?

Hotels are very complex operations and there are many aspects of environmental and social sustainability which are important within hospitality. These are all issues where hotel companies may be able to support organisations, as customers, in their own sustainability goals.

To help prioritise requests, we've highlighted the issues that are most material to a hotel context:

Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate risks</li> <li>• Waste management and the circular economy (including food waste)</li> <li>• Water stewardship and water risks</li> <li>• Biodiversity</li> <li>• Responsible consumption (especially in relation to meat products)</li> <li>• Responsible procurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights (including human trafficking and modern slavery)</li> <li>• Ethical recruitment and decent working conditions</li> <li>• Diversity, equity and inclusion</li> <li>• Youth employment</li> <li>• Community support</li> <li>• Local economic investment</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Dr Jonathon Day, Purdue University; Prof. Dr. Willy Legrand, IU International University of Applied Sciences; Olivia Ruggles-Brice, Director Greenview. We would also like to thank Charlotte Eschweiler and Sofia Wohak-Jimenez, students at IU International University of Applied Sciences, for their help.

## Recommended steps

Below are the steps for determining what sustainability information to request from hotels.

### 1. Determine how your hotel partners can support your objectives

Different information will be useful to you depending on your aims:

- Helping your business achieve its supply chain objectives and reporting requirements.
- Identifying hotels with particular guest-facing initiatives your travellers want to see.
- Screening hotels for particular sustainability practices.

### 2. Determine the questions that will help achieve your objective

Some ways to determine what questions to ask include:

- **Aligning with commonly used question sets.** Using question sets such as the Global Business Travel Association's (GBTA) free [Hotel RFP template](#), will ensure they are understood by hotels receiving them, which is likely to increase the quality of their responses.
- **Understanding what information hotel suppliers may be able to provide.** If commonly used questions don't meet your needs, it can be useful to understand what information hotel suppliers may be able to provide. Consider reaching out to some of your suppliers to request a meeting to discuss this with their sustainability representative.
- **Developing your own questions.** Try to ensure they:
  - Have clear definitions and simple language to avoid the risk of misunderstanding.
  - Are relevant to most hotels. Specific initiatives (such as occupancy-based heating, cooling and lighting or energy-efficient kitchen appliances) may not be relevant for each hotel type or prevalent in specific markets.
  - Request data which has been calculated using commonly accepted methodologies (such as [HCMI](#) and [HMMI](#) – see Box 1 for further information) to ensure the responses you receive are comparable.
  - Request only relevant information which you will incorporate in your decision making and/or reporting.

### 3. Determine who your questions should be directed to

- Some sustainability efforts are managed at a **hotel level** e.g. food options, recycling capabilities and community support programmes.
- Other efforts may be managed at a **group- or brand-wide level** e.g. organisational policies, commitments or programmes.

The example questions below are split between those which are more relevant to hotels and those which could be directed to corporate account managers.

## Example questions for hotels

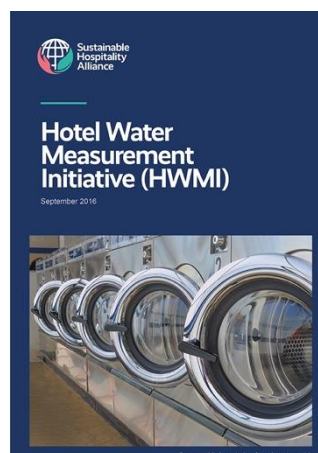
The following are example questions that could be directed to hotels to assess their sustainability performance and practices.

- Different questions apply depending on what your organisation's objective is.
- You should aim to only ask for information you will use in your own decision making or reporting.
- See Box 1 for more information on understanding the data you receive.

### 1. Measuring and evaluating environmental performance

These types of example questions can help you understand and compare the environmental performance of hotels. They can also provide data which you might need to incorporate into your own reporting.

- What is the hotel's carbon footprint per occupied room, using the HCMI Methodology? Indicate the unit used (e.g. kgs or lbs).
- What is the hotel's carbon footprint per area of meeting space per hour, using the HCMI Methodology? Indicate the units used (e.g. kgs or lbs and m<sup>2</sup> or ft<sup>2</sup>).
- What is the hotel's energy intensity? Indicate the metric used (e.g. BTU/ft<sup>2</sup> or kWh/m<sup>2</sup>).
- What percent of the hotel's total energy is renewable or covered by retired Renewable Energy Certificates or a Guarantee of Origin?
- What is the hotel's water use per occupied room using the HWMI methodology? Indicate the unit used (e.g. litres or gallons).
- What is the hotel's water use per area of meeting space per hour, using the HWMI methodology? Indicate the units used (e.g. litres or gallons and m<sup>2</sup> or ft<sup>2</sup>).
- What percentage of the hotel's waste is diverted from landfill?



## Box 1. Understanding the environmental performance of hotels

### • Climate and energy

The energy intensity of a hotel can be a useful metric but does not provide the best picture of their climate-related impacts. It should be combined with an understanding of what portion of their energy comes from a reputable renewable energy source and an understanding of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the hotel.

HCMI ([Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative](#)) is the commonly accepted way to measure and compare scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions of hotels. It includes emissions related to fuels burnt on site (e.g. in gas boilers and company vehicles) and electricity used on site. It also accounts for emissions related to any outsourced laundry and refrigerants (e.g. used in air conditioning). Hotels can use HCMI for free to calculate their carbon footprint per occupied room and the carbon footprint of an area of meeting space per hour.

While scope 3 emissions (from a hotel's supply chain) are an important consideration for management of climate impacts, measurement of these emissions is particularly complex. As such, there is not yet an industry accepted way to measure scope 3 emissions of hotels but is understood as a need for future development.

### • Water

HWMI ([Hotel Water Measurement Initiative](#)) is the commonly accepted way to measure and compare water consumption of hotels. It includes metered (e.g. municipal) and unmetered (e.g. borehole) sources of water used by a hotel and also accounts for water used by any outsourced laundry providers. Hotels can use HWMI for free to calculate their water footprint per occupied room (per night) and the water footprint of an area of meeting space per hour.

### • Waste

Historically, the most comparable way to measure waste-related performance of hotels has been through the percentage diversion from landfill.

In September 2021, WWF released the [Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology](#), a commonly agreed methodology for measuring waste in hotels, including food waste, to help guide accurate tracking. As a new methodology, hotels may need some time to acquaint themselves with it before being able to provide figures.

### • Ensuring a fair comparison

If you are using performance data to compare different hotels, it is important to remember that a hotel's environmental performance can be impacted by factors such as their geographic location, differing local sustainability issues, and service level. For example, it would be unrepresentative to compare the performance of a 5\* hotel in Dubai to a 3\* hotel in London.

The [Cornell Hotel Sustainability Benchmarking Index \(CHSB\)](#) is an industry-led global collection and benchmarking initiative, with data on energy, water and carbon emissions from over 20,000 hotels around the world and is available free of charge. The CHSB dataset uses the HCMI and HWMI methodologies and can be used to compare the information that hotels provide to industry benchmarks for hotels of the relevant service level and location to ensure you get a reasonable indication of their performance.

CHSB will incorporate WWF's waste methodology to enable benchmarking of waste as well.

### • Estimating carbon data

If you need carbon data to include in your reporting but hotels aren't able to provide it, you can use the [Greenview Hotel Footprinting Tool](#) to estimate the carbon footprint of a hotel stay or meeting in particular location. This free tool uses HCMI and data from CHSB to make the calculation instantly.

## 2. Identifying guest-facing initiatives

These types of example questions can help you identify which hotels have particular guest-facing initiatives. Consider which are the most important ones that your travellers would want to see.

Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the hotel offer sustainable housekeeping options e.g. a towel reuse programme or housekeeping opt-outs?</li><li>• Does the hotel's food options feature responsibly sourced ingredients (e.g. certified as sustainable or ethically produced)?</li><li>• Does the hotel offer both vegetarian and vegan meal options?</li><li>• Does the hotel reduce guest-facing plastics e.g. large format bathroom amenities, water refilling stations or only offering straws on request?</li><li>• Does the hotel have electric vehicle charging stations?</li><li>• Does the hotel offer waste recycling for guests?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does the hotel highlight or promote local culture/eco tourist spots or produce?</li><li>• Does the hotel source produce from the local community? <i>Ensure to define what 'local' means to your organisation.</i></li><li>• Does the hotel have a community support programme that guests can participate in?</li><li>• Does the hotel provide information to guests about how to visit local attractions responsibly?</li></ul>



### 3. Screening hotels for sustainability practices

These types of example questions can provide information to help you screen hotels based on the sustainability practices you would like them to have. Consider which practices are the most important to you and will have an impact on your decisions.

Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the hotel has a third party audited environmental certification or eco-label, please provide the name.<sup>i</sup></li> <li>• Does the hotel offer carbon offsetting for meetings and/or guest rooms?</li> <li>• Does the hotel have a documented responsible sourcing initiative?</li> <li>• Does the hotel have a waste and/or food waste reduction strategy?</li> <li>• Does the hotel have documented plans to reduce energy and water consumption?</li> <li>• Does the hotel ban foods and items created from endangered species from on-site restaurants and shops?</li> <li>• Does the hotel contribute to the restoration of nature?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the hotel group hire from disadvantaged groups locally?</li> <li>• Does the hotel help local people build a career within hospitality by hiring them and assisting with their development?</li> <li>• Does the hotel support or promote development of local small/medium businesses?</li> <li>• Does the hotel have a community engagement or development programme?</li> <li>• Does the hotel have an employee wellbeing programme?</li> </ul>

### Hotel sustainability certifications

<sup>i</sup> For more information about certifications relevant to hotels see our [factsheet](#).





## Example questions for corporate account managers

Questions about group- and brand-wide policies, commitments, programmes and alignment with widely-recognised frameworks are best directed to corporate account managers to avoid confusion and increase the quality of these answers.

Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group- or brand-wide climate initiatives including GHG measurement, science-based targets, net zero targets and pathways as well as assessment of climate risks and existence of climate resilience plans.</li><li>• Group- or brand-wide environmental certifications.<sup>i</sup></li><li>• Assessment of water risks and existence of water resilience plans.</li><li>• Assessments of biodiversity impacts.</li><li>• Participation in, or reporting aligned with CDP, GRI, SASB, TCFD or similar.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supply chain practices, including the existence and content of a supplier code of conduct, supplier diversity, human rights due diligence and the use of independent human rights/social audits or certifications (such as SA800, SMETA, BSCI).</li><li>• Alignment with external initiatives, such as the ECPAT code of conduct.</li><li>• Existence and content of policies and/or codes of conduct, including those focused on human trafficking, human rights, fair labour practices and local employment.</li><li>• Human rights and modern slavery, including requirements to report through the UK Modern Slavery Act (or similar legislation in other jurisdictions) and any actions taken to prevent modern slavery.</li><li>• Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programmes and practices.</li><li>• Commitments to ethical recruitment practices, such as minimum/living wages.</li></ul>

## Ensuring a fair comparison

This document is intended to provide guidance and example questions to organisations looking to assess the sustainability of the hotels in their supply chain. Focussing on the issues that are most relevant to the impacts of hospitality industry will help to ensure that hotels are being measured, and compared, on the topics that are most material, and improve the quality and efficiency of the data being requested.

<sup>i</sup> For more information about certifications relevant to hotels see our [factsheet](#).