Palais Boréal

Carbon Neutral Event Planner

Guide intended for event planners
at the Palais des congrès de Montréal

This guide was created by Planetair in the context of the Palais Boréal carbon offset program developed for clients of the Palais des congrès de Montréal

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Palais des congrès de Montréal

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→ Introduction

In keeping with its objective to reduce the environmental impacts of events it hosts, the Palais launched a carbon offsetting program in cooperation with Planetair. This guide was created for the purpose of fostering continued reduction of the climate impact of events by providing organizers with relevant information as well as a tool to collect and calculate Greenhouse Gas emissions (GHGs) generated by an event. The guide also provides ideas on how to reduce and offset GHGs.

This program complements another initiative whereby event participants can offset their travel-related GHGs. The process is available online.

What is a carbon neutral event?

A carbon neutral event is an event that is planned in such a way as to reduce, as much as possible, GHG emissions throughout the life cycle of the event and which offsets those emissions that cannot be reduced.

→ Events and climate change

Events have a climate impact due to the GHG emissions that result from their activities.
The three main sources of event-related GHG emissions are:

- → Transportation (organizers, speakers, exhibitors, attendees, etc.)
- → Energy use (heating, lighting, air conditioning, equipment, etc.)
- → Waste

Transportation is the main source of event-generated GHG emissions. For most events, travel by organizers and participants is unavoidable. GHG emissions resulting from energy use result primarily from the use of electricity, heating and air conditioning at the organizers' offices and exhibit spaces.

Waste also constitutes a significant source of GHG emissions, particularly when organic matter is not composted. We promote sound management of residual materials by focusing on the right actions to take to better sort materials.

Why act?

Organizing a carbon neutral event allows you to reconcile the interests of your organization with those of the participants, governments, and investors in matters of social and environmental responsibility.

Good reasons to organize a carbon neutral event:

1. Contribute to the fight against climate change
2. Raise awareness about climate change by setting an example
3. Boost your event's competitiveness

- → by reducing your operational costs
  (lowering your energy consumption related GHG emissions is tantamount to reducing your costs)
- → by attracting investors interested in environmentally responsible events
- → by communicating your commitment
- → by increasing your attractiveness (directors, employees, participants, etc.)



→ How to achieve carbon neutrality?

Achieving carbon neutrality is an easy five-step process. The first step consists in calculating the GHG emissions generated by your event. The second is geared toward reducing your emissions, whereas the third step consists of offsetting unavoidable emissions by purchasing certified carbon credits. Step four involves choosing your preferred way of financing carbon neutrality. Step 5 is optional and consists of encouraging event participants to offset the GHG emissions related to their travel. To help you accomplish these five steps, we provide you with simple and effective tools.

→ Step 1: Quantify your emissions

The first thing to do is to get a complete picture of the climate impact of your event. To do so, you need to calculate your event's GHG emissions.

An event's main sources of GHGs are usually the following:

- → Travel by local and international participants
- → Travel by speakers, exhibitors, and journalists
- → Business travel by event organizers
- → Energy consumption by buildings (conference halls, exhibition spaces) and equipment
- → Waste
- → Lodging for the speakers, exhibitors, staff members, journalists, etc.
- → Transportation of goods
- → Catering services (food service operators)

These sources are taken into account by the calculator developed by Planetair. The calculator was designed taking into account the ISO 14064 standard and the GHG Protocol drafted by the World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Planetair's calculator assists you in identifying and gathering the relevant data for the calculations.
It is recommended that a single person be tasked with collecting the relevant data.

Once inputted in the calculator, the data is converted into tonnes of CO_2 equivalent, using the appropriate conversion factors. The calculator uses conversion factors provided by trusted sources. All that is required from the organizer is to enter the data into the calculator in order to obtain the result.



→ Step 2: Reduce GHG emissions

Below are a few things you can do to reduce your event's GHG emissions. Do not hesitate to bring your suppliers on board and require that their goods and services be environmentally friendly (ISO 14001, ISO 14064, ISO 20121, Terra Choice, EPEAT, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), BNQ 9700-253 certifications, etc.).

Energy savings and renewable energy

By holding your event at the Palais des congrès de Montréal, you are choosing one of the first convention centres to offset the GHGs stemming from the energy the building consumes. You may wish to implement the following suggestions at your own offices.

- → Opt for natural lighting and ventilation
- → Use energy efficient light bulbs
- → Avoid using heating or air conditioning whenever possible
- → Use up-to-date energy efficient equipment
- → Avoid the use of generators
- → Turn off electrical equipment when not in use

Resource use, recycling, and re-use

- → Provide recycling and composting bins that are clearly identified
- → Recycle hazardous waste separately (batteries, paint, used oils, etc.)
- → Do business with a recognized recycling centre or sorting plant
- → Opt for reusable materials
- → Avoid hard copies
- → Ensure that promotional material is environmentally friendly
- → Encourage participants to use reusable water bottles and coffee cups
- → During dismantling, salvage wood, metal and other materials for reuse

Purchase recycled materials

- → Avoid single-use products
- → Ban plastic bags
- → Choose packaging-free products
- → Use reusable badges and ensure they are collected after the event
- → Use chlorine-free, FSC certified recycled paper with a high level of post-consumer fibers
- → Print double-sided
- → Use page layouts that have been optimized to reduce paper consumption
- → Limit handouts to participants

Food services

- → Choose local, fair trade or organic food
- → Rent or loan products and equipment
- → Use reusable, recyclable or compostable dishware
- → Avoid single-use bottles and make water fountains or pitchers available
- → Serve vegetarian meals (more energy efficient)
- → Donate food surpluses



The Palais des congrès de Montréal's exclusive caterer, Maestro Culinaire, can help you reduce your event's footprint by providing you with reusable tableware and water pitchers. Capital Traiteur can also prepare attractive and creative vegetarian dishes that will impress the most demanding palates. Any food surplus are donated to *La Maison du Père*, which provides assistance to homeless people. Do not hesitate to talk about your environmental considerations with the Palais and Maestro Culinaire's teams.





Transportation

- → Choose direct flights over flights with connections
- → Reduce travel for planning meetings (use video and teleconferencing)
- → Encourage employees, suppliers, clients, and others to avoid vehicle idling
- → Encourage participants to use public transit and active transportation
- → Provide economic incentives to increase the use of public transit (free passes, discount fares, etc.)
- → Encourage carpooling
- → Provide a free shuttle service

New technologies

- → Use email and telephone communications
- → Provide a means for online registration and payment
- → Use Internet and email to promote the event (electronic newsletters, internet banners, electronic press releases, electronic timetables)

→ Step 3: Offset GHG emissions

Now that you've reduced your GHG emissions, the next step consists of neutralizing the residual emissions that cannot be reduced, by buying quality carbon offset credits.

High quality carbon credits you can trust

The Gold Standard is the most stringent among voluntary carbon offsetting standards. Gold Standard certified projects must not only reduce GHGs in the atmosphere but also contribute to the sustainable development of local communities (higher living standards, knowledge transfers, new jobs, less pollution, etc.).

Projects are awarded this certification from the Gold Standard Foundation only once they've undergone third-party validation and verification. Projects are also tracked throughout their lifecycle. The Gold Standard was jointly established by WWF International, the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace, the Pembina Institute, and 80 other non-governmental organizations.

When purchasing Gold Standard certified carbon credits, you are assured that the GHG emission reductions they represent are real, measurable, unique, permanent, added and verified by an independent third party. Each Gold Standard carbon credit bears a unique serial number that ensures its traceability on the Gold Standard public registry, from when it enters to when it exits the market. This system ensures the carbon credits are only sold once.

Choosing the right carbon credits is an important step as it will determine the actual impact of your event on the climate. The voluntary carbon offsetting market is not regulated, which explains the wide range of carbon credits out there.

→ Step 4: Find carbon neutral funding for your event

There are various ways to fund the offset of event-related GHG emissions. One option consists in including the cost of carbon credits in the general budget of the event and using the general revenues to purchase the credits. Another option is to single out the cost of offsetting in the registration fees and ask participants to contribute towards that goal. You can make the contribution compulsory or voluntary. The cost by participant is often less than one might imagine! A third option is to find a sponsor that would be interested in making your event carbon neutral through its contribution.

→ Step 5: Encourage participants to offset their travel

This step in not required to certify your event carbon neutral, as you cannot be held accountable for all of your participants. Nevertheless, you can use the online platform operated by the Palais and Planetair to quickly and easily calculate and offset the GHGs related to travel, regardless of the means of transportation your participants use.

Information on this subject is available online.

You may raise awareness of this opportunity by featuring the platform in your communications with participants (web site, social media, emails, etc.).

What is GHG offsetting?
Buying offset credits means investing in projects that help reduce the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere – projects focused on renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean technology or tree planting. Because all the GHG emissions generated by an event are offset by the reductions achieved by the offsetting project, the event is said to be carbon neutral. To achieve real and verifiable reductions, make sure you opt for high quality carbon credits, such as those that are Gold Standard certified.

→ Tailor-made support offered by Planetair

Planetair can help you on your journey to becoming a carbon neutral event. Planetair can assist with emissions calculations and offsetting as well as with communications to highlight your leadership in the fight against climate change and the protection of the environment.

Planetair offers Gold Standard carbon credits to make an event carbon neutral and delivers a certification (with an eco-logo) to that effect. Planetair can also deliver a qualified certification for partial offsetting (e.g. participants' travel, or specific tonnage).

→ What is the process to become a carbon-neutral event?

1. Inform your Event Manager of your interest in participating in the Palais Boréal program
2. Get in touch with Planetair
3. Scope your needs and sign an agreement with Planetair
4. Receive the data collection tool and the eco-logo
5. Use the tool to compile data at the end of the event
6. Transmit the results to Planetair for verification
7. Get your carbon neutral certificate and invoice

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