

USTOA Hotel Sustainability Guidelines for Tour Operators

At USTOA, we strive to provide guidance to all Active and Associate members on various sustainability and DEI topics, including accommodation sustainability. While many certification programs exist that assist members in sourcing hotels that align with their sustainability standards, the vast number of programs, along with accompanying stipulations, can make it a tricky process to navigate. Below, you will find a set of guidelines, along with recommended criteria, to point you and your organization in the right direction. Since our members have a variety of organizational structures, we are providing a range of options. Our guidance is divided into four different hotel sustainability frameworks to consider while sourcing hotels:

Framework 1 - Hotels with 3rd party certifications

Choosing a hotel that has been certified sustainable by a set of already-existing criteria is a great way to streamline your procurement process. Many 3rd party certification programs exist – you can find a list of GSTC-recognized accreditation programs [here](#).

Framework 2 - Hotels with science-based targets and a climate action roadmap

Many hotels will choose to not pursue certification and instead create their own set of goals and metrics. [Science-based targets](#) provide a clearly defined pathway for companies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and are being used by hotels across the world to help prevent the worst impacts of climate change and future-proof business growth. You can use [this dashboard](#) to see a list of accommodations that have had GHG emission reduction targets validated as science-based by the SBTi. You can learn more about how hotels utilize science-based targets to make significant carbon reductions [here](#).

Framework 3 - Hotels that have another credible system of addressing their impact

Outside of certifications and science-based targets, various credible systems exist that hotels choose to partake in and incorporate into their sustainability strategy. [The Long Run](#), a community of nature-based businesses, has their own set of standards that accommodations must meet to be a member. This is one example of many – if you come across a hotel pursuing something along these lines, we encourage you to learn more about it to assess how it aligns with your organization’s sustainability standards.

Framework 4 - Hotels that have no system for assessing sustainability

If you come across a hotel that has no system for assessing sustainability standards, we encourage you to utilize the [World Travel & Tourism Council’s Sustainability Basics Program](#) criteria to assess the property in your own time, granted the hotel will comply. The Basics are designed to offer a starting point and help raise awareness of the minimum level of sustainability expected across the global hotel industry. With that being said, the criteria, which is divided by efficiency, planet, and people, can assist USTOA members throughout the hotel procurement process. You can start the hotel assessment by downloading the criteria and sending/reviewing it with the hotel to gauge if their operations meet your

sustainability standards. If they do not, we recommend that you pursue hotels that utilize one of the first three options.

Tips for implementing hotel sustainability into your sustainability strategy:

Step 1: Start from within your own organization:

- Learn, create a plan, take action – discover what responsible sourcing means to you as an organization by defining your baseline and desired end goal. A suggestion is to use the [B Corp Impact Assessment](#) as foundational learning tool for your whole business, irrespective of if you want to pursue B Corp certification.

Step 2: Engage your supply chain:

- Take lessons from step 1 - engage suppliers and talk with them, share resources that help them start/continue their journeys.
- Ideally, every supplier a Tour Operator selects will help the Tour Operator meet their objectives. Example: for every supply partner that mitigates the carbon impact of their work, then the Tour Operator has one less scope 3 to compensate for.

Step 3: Consider your priorities:

- Decide what's important in your own business to progress your sustainability/impact plan by creating a collaborative, inclusive action plan using the 4 categories defined in this document.

Items to note:

- A decent number of hotels will advertise sustainability efforts, including certifications and accreditations, on their website. However, we encourage you to inquire about it throughout your hotel sourcing process to ensure you are aware of all sustainability initiatives.
- Some hotels may be pursuing a combination, or all three, of the above frameworks.

For more information about the USTOA SIR Community, its resources, and ways to collaborate, please feel free to contact Molly Laycob, our Global Social Impact Manager. Molly is dedicated to supporting USTOA members on their journey towards more sustainable practices and can be reached at gsi@ustoa.com.