



# Simpler sustainability.

Building an eco-strategy into your travel policy.

ADVITO





# First: There are two things to think about.

Sustainability is no longer a buzzword, it's a must have. But developing a sustainability strategy and making it work effectively as part of your travel program is a daunting task. Two tasks, actually. And that's how we'll divide this guide:

## Part 1:

Key topics to consider as you shape your organization's travel sustainability strategy.



## Part 2:

Specific ways to operationalize that strategy within your travel policy.



Together, the two halves of this guide will provide you with detailed steps – whether you're taking your first sustainability steps or already well down the path. And together, Advito – a leading travel consultancy and SAP Concur App Center partner – and SAP Concur will offer the expertise you need to make it work.





# Part 1:

Key topics to consider  
as you build your  
organization's travel  
sustainability strategy.

There isn't one right way to start this process – there are six. And the **six tips** that follow will outline what you need think about, how to get it done, and why it matters.



## Tip 1: Build the foundation.

While this is a travel-focused sustainability strategy, it takes more than just your team to make it work. You need to collaborate with sustainability leaders, councils, and committees from across the company. And if you don't have a team in place quite yet, bring in HR, IT, finance, travel, and other representatives to get a sustainability committee started. Then work together to:

1. Understand your organization's overall sustainability focus and priorities.
2. Align those priorities with the organization's vision and values.
3. Identify the company's key quantifiable sustainability goals.

You'll also need to identify and document your goals for this sustainability strategy and make sure they align with the company's broader sustainability KPIs. You should be able to clearly articulate your key priorities and focus areas, as well as craft both short- and long-term benchmarks to track your progress.

The final act of this first step? Get the top brass to sign on the bottom line. Executive support is essential to the effectiveness of any program, especially one with such aspirations.







## Tip 2: Know the regulations.

Without a clear understanding of current and pending sustainability-related regulations, your program won't get far. Familiarize yourself with standardization frameworks in your part of the world, like [IFRS](#), [GRI](#), [TCFD](#), and [GHG](#), which were created by nonprofits and are used by governing bodies from the SEC to the European Union as they create legislation and mandates.

As it relates to business travel, for example, the [GHG Scope 3](#) protocol is the recommended global standard for calculating and reporting emissions. There are 15 categories under Scope 3 to be aware of, but for employee commuting focus on:

- **[3.6 \(Scope 3, Category 6\): Business Travel](#)** – covering emissions from the transportation of employees for business-related activities in vehicles owned or operated by third parties, such as aircraft, trains, buses, and passenger cars.
- **[3.7: Employee Commuting](#)** – covering emissions from the transportation of employees between their homes and their worksites. Emissions from employee commuting may arise from automobile, bus, or air travel or other modes of transportation (e.g., subway, bicycling, walking).
- **Emissions Calculations** – There are three different ways to calculate emissions, based on the data you have available: spend-based (the least accurate), distance-based (more accurate), or fuel-based (the most accurate).

It's also important to be aware of governing bodies, like EFRAG, SEC, ISSB, and your regional/provincial/local entities – as well as the regulations they'll be rolling out between 2023 and 2028. These include:

- **[EFRAG](#)** (European Financial Reporting Advisory Group) is the governing body in the European Union that's created the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which requires detailed reporting related to environmental, social, and governance topics.
- **[SEC](#)** (Securities and Exchange Commission) that covers the United States, is mandatory, and is rolling out with a phased approach – requiring disclosures of climate-related risks, financial-statement metrics, and other targets.
- **[ISSB](#)** (International Sustainability Standard Board) is a global entity, deciding on mandatory applications within individual jurisdictions.
- **Regional/Provincial/Local Regulations** will also become more relevant. For example, the Climate Corporate Data Accountability Act (SB 253) that passed in California, U.S. in September 2023.





### Tip 3: Incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I); social responsibility; and human rights.

It's impossible to overestimate the importance of these elements in your travel sustainability strategy. A diverse, healthy workforce is vital to building a vibrant, successful, sustainable business. So these priorities simply must be adhered to across your own organization and among your suppliers.

Be sure to integrate health, safety, and duty of care management/monitoring into your strategies and reporting, too. And think about shifting from a cost-focused policy to a [traveler-focused policy](#), where comfort and quality come first.



### Tip 4: Examine your supplier strategy.

Make sure your travel sustainability priorities – including DE&I, social responsibility, and human rights – are a part of your supplier-screening process and RFP criteria. When appropriate, suppliers should have relevant certifications like LEED, Ecovadis, etc. They should also follow accepted standards like the [International Organization for Standardization](#) (ISO).

It's also important to look beyond your suppliers to ensure their suppliers are meeting your environmental, human-rights, and ethical-labor goals, as well.



## Tip 5: Build a data and reporting strategy.

A goal isn't a goal if you can't measure it. So be sure you can capture the data, and be sure you have the reporting tools in place to manage your progress toward your longer-term goals and shorter-term benchmarks. Here's how:

- Collaborate with your IT and/or data teams to identify the right data sources and guarantee accessibility, comprehensiveness, and accuracy.
- Identify any gaps – make sure, for example, you can capture travel bookings made directly with suppliers, so you don't miss a significant portion of your travel-emissions information.
- Continuously re-evaluate and, if necessary, adjust policies and procedures according to your unique results, as this will ensure continued progress and greater impact over time.





## Tip 6: Engage employees.

Employees need to know what your travel sustainability commitments are, as well as how those commitments fit into the overall business plan and their individual work. Every part of your strategy should be meaningful and easy for employees to understand.

**Align.** They need to know how your travel policy, for example, aligns with the business's big-picture strategy. And perhaps even more importantly, they need to see themselves as part of the strategy and understand that they're the ones who'll achieve these goals.

**Inform.** You'll also want to keep employees informed about initiatives, efforts, and progress through a variety of communication channels. Try using tools like Microsoft Teams/Slack, newsletters, workshops, and quarterly videos and/or meetings.

**Teach.** But engagement goes beyond communication. As a part of your strategy, it's important to provide traveler-specific training for groups such as LGBTQIA+, solo travelers, and female travelers.

**Guide.** Also, remind employees to ask for guidance regarding cultural acceptance as they travel to different countries and cultures. Be sure to cover areas like religion, appearance, etiquette, LGBTQIA+ destinations, security advice, and other relevant issues.

**Give.** If service and volunteering are a part of your corporate culture, you could also encourage travelers to give back during business trips, e.g., volunteering in travel destinations, and determine what (if any) approvals or requirements you may need from management.

**Listen.** Finally, create opportunities for feedback. Gather input from employees on strategy, execution, and results. And make sure to balance quantitative input (say, from surveys) with forums that allow you to gather qualitative insight, as well.





## Part 2:

### Specific ideas for operationalizing that strategy within your travel policies.

With your travel sustainability strategy established, it's now time to put it to work within your travel program. The following **tips, tricks, and best practices** are here to help you build policies that *deliver*.



## Essential Trips

This is where you help travelers determine the difference between “we have to go” and “we could probably meet virtually.” To do so, consider the following:

- Require pre-approvals from managers for any trip lasting 24 hours or less, or for flights of 12 hours or more. Also limit one- and two-day trips, because if it’s a day trip for a one-hour internal meeting, it can likely be replaced by a videoconference. If it’s a four-day trip to close deals with four different prospects and manage escalations with four other clients, that’s essential.
- Make it easier for employees to access and use virtual collaboration/meeting tools and tell them who they can go to for support.
- Be sure to include a “stay or go” decision tree in your policy and build logic into every facet of your guidelines.
- Offer guidance on how to select meeting venues based on optimum locations and routing.
- Keep travelers engaged in the decision-making process along the way, as this helps them understand the policy and make sustainable decisions in the future.



## Air Travel

Air travel is rarely going to be the most efficient option, but it can be more sustainable. Here are some guidelines to consider:

- Point travelers to flights with the lowest emissions and try newer-generation aircraft that are more efficient, like Airbus NEO, B737Max, or A350 for long haul. These planes can be, on average, 20% more fuel efficient than older models.
- Point travelers to direct flights whenever possible and have them assess the route when indirect flights are necessary. Keep in mind that while a non-stop flight will always create smaller carbon footprint, there’s still opportunity for more fuel efficiency by simply changing a stopover point. For example:
  - Flying from Munich to Tokyo via Dubai with Emirates uses 7.8 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. If you fly via Helsinki with Finnair, the total is 5.7 tons. And that 2.1-ton difference is approximately one individual’s climate budget per year.
- Require travelers to book economy class for trips under six hours, but adapt this number as necessary, based on your industry and cultural norms. Adding the comfort of business class to longer trips helps improve the employee experience.
- Prioritize rail travel if it’s an option and if the travel time is 2.5 hours *or less* than air. For example, if flight time is one hour and rail time is 3.5 hours, direct travelers to rail.



## Rail and Car

Yes, rail is roughly 20 times more carbon efficient than air, and here's how you make it more efficient than ever.

- Prioritize rail in Europe, China, Japan, the US East Coast, and the US Pacific Northwest.
- Encourage travelers to take rail as it offers fast boarding times, limited security delays, and no waiting for baggage. That adds up to much less time spent getting to and from meetings, and that's good for their overall wellbeing.
- Have travelers take rail if they need to be more productive during travel time. On a trip under 1,000km, two-thirds of the total trip duration is productive time vs. one-third with air and one-fifth with a car.
- Recommend night trains, which are reopening in Europe. They offer hotel and transportation in one and provide a great option to improve travel efficiency and reduce days away from home.
- Push public transportation. If travelers feel safe, encourage them to take public transport when traveling within a city. On a 20km drive, it saves five kg of CO<sub>2</sub> compared to a taxi.
- Select small. When renting a car, have travelers avoid large SUVs and four-wheel-drive vehicles – whether they're hybrid, electric, or gas powered – unless they're sharing the vehicle. Prioritize hybrid or electric vehicles and smaller, efficient gas-powered vehicles.
- Encourage carpooling for employees traveling to the same destinations, meetings, conferences, etc. – including taxi shares, sharing car rentals, etc.





## Accommodations and Event Facilities

Where travelers stay is just as important as how they get there.

- Recommend in-policy hotels within walking distance or within 8km of a trip's primary destination, if available.
- Promote in-policy “green” hotels – as indicated in your booking tool – as travelers make their choices.
- Prompt travelers to avoid luxury hotels, resorts, and hotels with large pools. Resorts, for example, can use 3 or 4 times more water per room per day.
- For event locations, prioritize facilities that:
  - Use green energy sources for electricity and heat.
  - Are easily accessible by train and public transportation and/or provide electric-powered shuttles.
  - Have multiple “green” hotels available within walking distance.
  - Serve “green” food and beverages, offer food and beverages from local/regional sources, offer vegetarian/vegan alternatives, and give leftovers to food banks.



## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Employee Wellbeing

Your travel sustainability policy isn't all about travel. DE&I initiatives, as well as overall wellbeing, are critical elements of sustainability and social responsibility strategies.

- Be sure your policy is available in formats for those who are color-blind, visually impaired, etc.
- Allow additional provisions to travelers with special needs, such as pregnant travelers, those in a wheelchair or travelers with protected characteristics.
  - Help employees learn to share their needs with their travel managers, so every traveler gets the support they need on the road.
    - » Consider adding required fields to your traveler/employee profile to make sure travel managers or TMCs get the employee health and emergency information they need.
  - Include guidelines for pregnant travelers, such as:
    - » Consulting a physician before travel.
    - » Keeping a copy of medical notes in case there's a problem on the trip.
- Work to improve employee wellbeing while reducing the impact of jetlag and fatigue.
  - Make business class available for flights longer than six hours or those crossing multiple time zones. Consider adding preapproval from managers if the trip is under six hours.
  - Try to have travelers avoid early departures and late arrivals.
  - Encourage travelers to reduce frequent trips to high-risk destinations.





# Make sustainability a natural choice.

The simpler your travel sustainability policies are to follow, the more likely your travelers are to follow them. And if you follow the tips and tactics in this guide, you'll make choosing eco-travel the first, most-obvious choice for every traveler.

You can [learn more in the No More Promises eBook](#).

Or [contact us](#) to see how SAP Concur solutions can support you on your sustainability journey.