



## **GEO's National Conference Sustainability Plan**

In an effort to reduce the environmental impact of our National Conference by attendees and GEO on the host community, a sustainability meeting plan will be implemented by GEO for the 2010 conference and future meetings. This plan will guide GEO's efforts to have a positive impact on the environment by preventing wasteful practices at its events.

Our intent is to not make this policy burdensome on GEO staff or conference attendees, but to put in place a plan of action that will allow us to implement sustainability efforts within the scope of our work and budget. This is a living document and will be updated as we move through the planning process for the various GEO events.

The plan is broken down as follows:

- Printing
- Food and Beverage Functions
- Educating Attendees
- Gifts
- Meeting Planner
- Evaluation of Recycling/Waste Prevention Efforts

### **Action Plan**

To reduce the effects of the GEO National Conference on the host community, GEO will undertake the following activities starting in 2009:

#### **Printing**

GEO is committed to preventing and reducing waste by:

- Reducing the use of paper by:
  - Eliminating workshop handouts. Handouts will be available electronically at least one week before the conference date for attendees to review. We estimate that this move will save more than 6,000 sheets of paper
  - Utilizing electronic communications to communicate with conference speakers (Speaker and Session Designer packets will be posted online) and registered conference attendees
  - Offering an on-line registration system
- Recycling plastic name badge holders by collecting them at the registration counter and all exit points for reuse at future events
- Printing conference promotional materials on recycled paper which lists the amount of recycled content in the paper wherever possible
- Encouraging double-sided printing by setting the default of computer lab printers to double-sided. Requesting that all progress reports and final reports produced in response to the conference are printed double-sided
- Not using fluorescent paper that is colored or glossy as these paper products are not accepted at many recycling plants
- Giving event attendees the option of removing their name from event mailing lists and opting to receive event materials online

- Cleaning up mailing list to remove duplicates as well as outdated mailing address and contacts
- Limiting the amount of promotional items that organizations can ship to the conference site to be displayed on the resource table (limit of 100 copies)
- Sending registration confirmation materials and other significant changes to the conference program electronically
- Using reusable or recyclable signage wherever possible

### **Food and Beverage Functions**

GEO will request that the hotel support sustainability efforts by implementing the following while the organization is in house:

- Collect and recycle paper and beverage containers used at the conference by placing recycle containers throughout the conference area
- Provide straw and stirrers upon request only
- Not utilize paper cups or water bottles during beverage service
- Not pre-fill water glasses
- Place pads of paper in a pile in the back of each breakout session room instead of at each place setting
- Serve condiments in bulk containers and pitchers for juices and water
- Use paper napkins made from recyclable contents or paper napkins that are compostable. Instruct bar staff not to give a cocktail napkin unless otherwise asked

### **Educating Attendees**

To ensure that attendees are aware of GEO's efforts to implement sustainability measures at its 2010 conference, GEO will:

- Educate attendees that speakers were asked to comply with a no handout policy
- Place information about its sustainability efforts on the conference web page
- Provide attendees with tips on our Web site about how they can help with our efforts pre-, on-site and post conference
- Inform attendees of the environmental initiatives that the Hilton Hotel has in place via our Web site
- Alert speakers of its intentions to not provide handouts at the 2010 conference
- Place signage throughout the conference venue reminding attendees of our sustainability efforts and how they can help with these efforts
- Make announcements throughout the conference reminding attendees of our efforts, thank attendees for their participation and support of our efforts, and recognize any special efforts by attendees

As part of our efforts to reduce the environmental impact of conferences, we will encourage attendees to be a part of our efforts by:

- Sharing rides between the host city airport and the conference venue (for 2010 Pittsburgh International Airport and Pittsburgh Hilton)
- Recycling newspapers, cans and glass in the recycling receptacles provided by the hotel in the conference area as well at their hotel room
- Participating in the hotel's water and energy conservation efforts by following the instructions posted in their room
- Returning their name badges at the end of the conference to the registration desk

*Last Updated Thursday, August 27, 2009*

## **Gifts**

GEO often purchases gifts for those individuals who provide logistical and program support for our events. We pledge that these gifts will be environmentally conscious (edible or reusable).

## **Meeting Planner**

GEO contracts with a full-service Conference and Meeting Management Company to manage the logistics for its national conference. GEO expects the meeting planner to take the initiative in identifying and recommending as many environmentally responsible conference features and practices as feasible per the conference goals and established budget. GEO will review all suggestions presented and make a final decision on which recommendations to implement. All approved recommendations must be incorporated into the meeting planners' logistical planning for the conference.

The planners' recommendations should incorporate the following waste prevention opportunities associated with:

- Transportation needs for attendees
- Selection of a meeting venue
- Provision of food and beverage at all conference events
- Procedure for registration and communicating with and disseminating information to attendees pre and post conference
- Utilization of local vendors for conference services
- Purchase of recyclable or recycled products

## **Evaluation of Recycling/Waste Prevention Efforts**

GEO is committed to reporting the impact of the activities undertaken as well as our success implementing the sustainability efforts as outlined in this document. Specifically GEO will:

- Obtain from the hotel figures on the amount of materials that were diverted from landfills
- Solicit feedback from conference attendees and gather suggestions for future meetings
- Track problems encountered implementing sustainability plan
- Document lessons learned and suggestions for improvement for following years