

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Technical

1. Why have 12 criteria been selected?

The 12 criteria have been selected following an intense process of industry review and based on their significance to be considered the baseline of sustainability that all hotels should be undertaking. They reflect both back-of-house and guest-facing activities, both of which are critical to making real sustainability progress and include both environmental and social aspects. During the review process, it became clear that reducing the number of criteria would compromise the robustness of the initiative because it would mean eliminating some key and fundamental actions. A phased approach has been suggested to allow time for the full set to be implemented. On the other hand, any additional criterion would dilute the focus and overwhelm those trying to put them into practice.

2. Why are some mandatory from the outset?

It is recognised that the 12 criteria, although basic in nature, will still take time and effort to implement, particularly in hotels which are starting out on their sustainability journey. For this reason, 8 of the criteria should be in place within the first year of implementation, and the remaining 4 by year three. There is flexibility in terms of which criteria hotels may choose to prioritise for year 1, but at least one needs to be from the 3 areas (Efficiency, Planet, People).

3. Why the heavy focus on environmental indicators?

Ten of the 12 criteria are actions related to the environment. This is because, for hotels in the initial stages of sustainability actions and planning, regardless of hotel type or location, getting to grips with environmental impact is vital. That said, the social elements of sustainability are also an extremely important part of any sustainability program so should be taken into consideration from the outset.

4. Why are no specific actions listed for the action plans for energy, water, waste and carbon?

Each hotel should develop its own action plan, based on its current processes and performance, and consider the specific requirements of its building and location. For this reason, there is no stipulated action to be taken. However, the most and least common practices in each region are identified through the 2022 Green Lodging Trends Report and further guidance is given on where hotels can start out with their action planning in each area.

5. Why is measurement a focus for energy, water and carbon but not waste?

It is recognised that the measurement of waste in a hotel is a challenging undertaking. Guidance is provided by the WWF Hotel Waste Measurement Methodology, however, establishing the relevant systems and processes is deemed to be more advanced than 'basic'. As such, for waste, the initial focus should be to identify waste streams and take actions to address them directly.

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6. Why is only a linen reuse program required, rather than one which includes towels?

In many hotels, a reuse program which includes towels and linen can be implemented. However, it is recognised that for a starter program linen is simpler in terms of the items involved and communication with staff. Towels come in varying sizes and use (e.g., hand towels, bath towels, swimming towels etc) and ensuring the correct implementation of a reuse program can be complex.

7. Why are there three indicators focusing on single use plastics alone?

Public awareness of single-use plastics is high, and many companies have commitments in place to reduce or eliminate them. By separating them into three criteria (only one of which needs to be in place by year 1) hotels following Hotel Sustainability Basics (the Basics) can prioritise the area of single-use plastics which are most relevant to their context, or where most progress has been made already.

8. Why does the criteria focus on vegetarian food not vegan, and why is there no focus on local sourcing and seasonal produce?

Reduction of meat consumption is a key means for hotels to reduce their carbon footprint, and providing vegetarian options is a first step to this, as well as being an important element of customer choice. While local sourcing and seasonal produce are important considerations, defining 'local' and 'seasonal' is highly context-based and beyond the scope of the 'basic' criteria.

9. Why are the social indicators so broad?

As recognised above, social sustainability should be a key part of any hotel's sustainability plans from the outset. However, the needs of local communities and the workforce will differ from hotel to hotel, as will the opportunities for specific actions to be taken. For this reason, the criteria are broad and allow a high level of flexibility for a property to define its own actions in this area. The 'Basics' do require that measurable progress takes place between year 1 and year 3, and the expectation is that programs evolve and expand over time.

10. Why is green transportation not covered?

Offering or promoting green transportation options to guests is an element of sustainable practice, however, it is not recognised as being one of a small set of fundamental criteria to be adopted as a first step. Guests may find their own information on public transport easily, and in some cases, a property's location may mean public transport is not an option. Supporting or providing 'green' transport such as eco-friendly vehicles would come as part of a more advanced sustainability program.

11. Why is a green housekeeping program not included?

The definition of a 'green' housekeeping program is broad and can be interpreted in several ways. A green housekeeping program can be seen as an evolution of a linen reuse program, requiring more complexity in Standard Operating Procedures and a more

complex communication strategy with guests. As such it is not deemed to be a 'basic' action to be taken, but something to be considered as a next step.

12. Why are the expectations different between the first and third years of engagement in the 'Basics'?

Sustainability is an ongoing process of improvement, and this is reflected in the structure of the 'Basics'. Some hotels may be able to have all 12 criteria in place in year 1, but others may face challenges based on local context (e.g., availability of replacement items for plastics) which will require more time to solve.

13. How is the risk of greenwashing mitigated, given that the 'Basics' only represent the very first steps a hotel should be taken?

The Hotel Sustainability Basics is not a certification scheme, it is an open-source resource for hotels and hotel companies to use to get started on sustainability. It provides the common denominator of actions that hotels should be taking at the minimum to ensure that their operations can be sustainable in the long term. In due course, those implementing the 'Basics' may choose that their compliance with these minimum criteria is verified, and as such show that they have embarked upon their sustainability journey.

14. What happens once a hotel has the 'Basics' in place?

A hotel which is complying with the basic criteria should then continue its sustainability journey using one of the many resources or certification schemes available. The Sustainable Hospitality Alliance's Pathway to Net Positive Hospitality provides an excellent roadmap to be followed and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)'s criteria for hotels provide the gold standard in terms of how sustainability should be delivered. Many of the online platforms have developed their own criteria, standards and certifications (Travalyst, Booking.com, Google among others) which may also be followed.

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0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

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