

BENCHMARKING METHODOLOGY

About the GDS-Index

The **Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index)** is a destination level programme that measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings, events and business tourism destinations.

The mission of the programme is to engage, inspire and enable destinations to become more sustainable places to visit, meet in and thrive in.

SDGs: Our work is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and we are working to mainstream the integration of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into the management of destinations globally. We are an official partner of the UN One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme.



Scope: Unlike other standards and rankings, the GDS-Index was specifically created for the events and meetings industry, and is the only programme of this type in the world.

Origins: It was created in 2015 by fifteen visionary Scandinavian Cities, MCI and the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

Ownership: The GDS-Index is not owned by any one organisation. It is operated as a multi-stakeholder partnership founded and endorsed by IMEX, MCI, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and European Cities Marketing. Gubi Consulting and Guy Bigwood is responsible for the management of the Secretariat.

Benchmarking categories and scoring methodology

Criteria

The 2019 GDS-Index uses 71 indicators that evaluate the destinations across four key areas:

- **Environmental Performance:** 17 questions – includes a city's performance pertaining to its policies and infrastructure, such as climate change commitment, recycling availability, public transport options and air pollution levels.
- **Social Progress Performance:** 10 questions – indicates the performance of the city against indicators of Personal Safety, Access to Information and Communications, Health and Wellness, Inclusiveness of the [Social Progress Index](#), and over tourism.
- **Supplier Performance:** 15 questions – addresses the sustainability commitment and performance of the local meetings' industry supply chain, including airports, events agencies, hotels, venues and restaurants.
- **Destination Management Performance:** 29 questions – indicates the sustainability commitment of the convention bureau or destination management organisation, including questions pertaining to maturity of the destinations sustainability strategy, leadership, communication of sustainability initiatives to support client planners, and the rigorousness of their reporting on sustainability operations.



GDS-Index Benchmarking – What do we assess?



The Index criteria evaluates 29 quantitative data points such as recycling/landfilling rates or percentages of third-party certified hotel rooms; and 41 qualitative concepts such as the destination’s commitment to sustainability, the existence of a destination sustainability strategy or maturity of their reporting practices.

Data collection and verification

After signing up as a member of the GDS-Index, the municipality, destination convention bureau or destination management organisation, gather data from stakeholders, and complete an online questionnaire. They answer the questions providing key performance indicators, evidence and supporting data.

Consultants from the GDS-Index then evaluate the submission, looking for inconsistencies and errors in the data before verifying the accuracy of the data.

Data sources

The quantitative data submitted by the destinations are usually from official sources, such as the city or the country’s statistics office or from publicly available data from credible sources such as The World Bank’s databank. Where there is no comparable city level data, a regional or national value is taken. As for qualitative indicators, usually it is information collected by the Destination Management Organisation, Convention Bureau or city with the help of their partners (city departments, hotel associations etc)

Scoring

Each performance indicator is assigned a number of maximum points and according to how well the destination fulfils each indicator, it gets some of these points, no points or all points (a full score). All of the indicators’ points for each category are then aggregated to get the category score and calculated as following, where i = indicator and c = category

Formula 1

$$Category\ score_c = \sum_i \left(\frac{achieved\ points_i}{maximum\ points_i} \right)$$



To get the total score of the index, each category score is multiplied by its assigned weight and then aggregated as shown in the following formula.

Formula 2
$$GDS\text{-Index Score} = \sum_c(\text{category score}_c \times \text{category weight}_c)$$

Destinations are then ranked by performance and the website is updated to reflect their ranking.

Criteria review and revision

The criteria reviewed annually and has a major update every two years following the GDS-Index review process:

- Participating destinations and the GDS-index consultants are surveyed to get feedback on the existing criteria and the choice of indicators. They are asked to specify what is missing and what could be improved.
- Existing standards from the tourism industry, and ranking systems from other industries are reviewed to identify best practices and new approaches to benchmarking.
- The indicators and criteria are updated, and the first draft is present to the Technical Advisory Committee.
- The criteria and scoring are updated with their input and represented and modified until there is agreement.
- The second draft is presented to all member destinations for their feedback.
- Any final feedback and changes are incorporated and presented to the Technical Advisory board for their final approval.

The 2019 Criteria was reviewed and developed from April to May and was released on June 5th 2019.

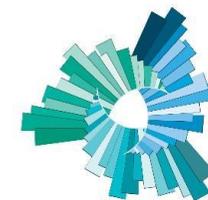
For any more information: please contact info@gds-index.com

LIST OF INDICATORS

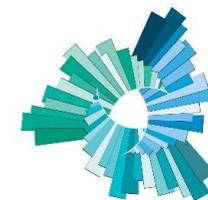


City Environmental Performance

Category		Indicators	Scoring	SDG
Climate, Energy & Emissions	EN-1	Does the city have a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation strategy? <i>Please select all that apply</i>		   
		City has a climate change mitigation strategy	yes= 1 point	
		City has a climate change adaptation strategy	yes= 1 point	
		Strategy includes reference to tourism	yes= 1 point	
	strategy includes reference to events and meetings	yes= 1 point		
EN-2	What are the city's emission reduction targets for 2030 compared to business as usual levels?	+70% reduction by 2030 - 4 points 51 - 70% reduction - 3 points 31 - 50% reduction - 2 points 20 - 30% reduction - 1 point Less than 20% - 0 Points		
EN-3	City's Greenhouse gas emissions per capita measured in Tonnes (of equivalent carbon dioxide units)?	< 3 MtCO ₂ e points - 4 points 3 > 4.9 MtCO ₂ e - 3 points 5 > 7.9 MtCO ₂ e - 2 points 8 > 11.9 MtCO ₂ e - 1 point >12 MtCO ₂ e - 0 points		
EN-4	What percentage of the city's total electricity is derived from renewable sources (e.g., wind, solar, hydro, tidal and wave, biofuels or geothermal energy), as a share of the city's total electricity consumption	> 40% - 4 points 30% > 39.9% - 3 points 20% > 29.9% - 2 points 10% > 19.9% - 1 point < 10% - 0 points		



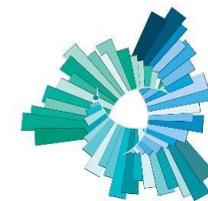
Waste	EN-5	What percentage of the city's solid waste has been disposed of in a landfill (including ashes from incineration)?	<p>> 50% - 0 points 35% > 50% - 1 point 20% > 35% - 2 points 10% > 20% - 3 points 0% to 10% - 4 points</p>	 
	EN-6	What percentage of city's solid waste is recycled? (Does not include incineration or composting)	<p>> 71% - 4 points 51% > 70% - 3 points 31% > 50% - 2 points 15% > 30% - 1 point < 15% - 0 points</p>	
	EN-7	What percentage of city's solid waste that is disposed of in an incinerator (energy-from-waste plant)?	<p>Incineration / Recycling > 2 - 0 points 1.5 > 2 - 1 point 1 > 1.5 - 2 points 0 > 1 - 3 points</p>	
	EN-8	What is the annual total collected solid waste (MSW) per capita (Kg/capita)	<p>Very low < 299 kg/yr - 3 points Low 300 > 449 kg/yr - 2 points Moderate 450 > 599 kg/yr - 1 points High > 600 kg/yr - 0 points</p>	
Air quality	EN-9	What is the city's annual Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) concentration?	<p>Very Low (<15) - 4 points Low (16 - 25) - 3 points Moderate (26 - 35) - 2 points High (36 - 69) - 1 point Very High (>70) - 0 points</p>	
	EN-10	What is the city's annual Particulate Matter (PM10) concentration?	<p>Very Low (<15) - 4 points Low (16-50) - 3 points Moderate (51-75) - 2 points High (76-100) - 1 point Very High (>101) - 0 points</p>	



Water	EN-11	What percentage of city wastewater receives centralized treatment	<p>> 80% - 4 points 60% > 79% - 3 point 40% > 59% - 2 points 20% > 39% - 1 points 0% to 19% - 0 points</p>	
	EN-12	What is the city's water and sanitation score on the Social Progress Index	<p>90 -100 - 4 points 75-90 - 3 points 50-75 - 2 points 25-50 - 1 point 0-24 - 0 points"</p>	
Transport	EN-13	Does destination offer public Bicycle Sharing Facilities for visitors? Please specify	<p>Yes - 1 point No - 0 points</p>	
	EN-14	How many kilometres of bicycle paths and lanes are there per 100 000 population	Not scored	
	EN-15	Does destination offer Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations?	<p>Yes - 1 point No - 0 points</p>	
	EN-16	Are the city's main airports connected to the city with public transport? <i>If more than one airport please calculate average and select the correct range</i>	<p>76-100 - 3 points 51-75 - 1 points 0-50 - 0 points"</p>	
Green Areas	EN-17	What is the City's Green Area (hectares) per 100,000 population?	<p>> 1000 ha - 4 points 500 > 999 ha - 3 points 200-499 ha - 2 points 100-200 ha - 1 point <100 ha - 0 points</p>	



City Social Performance



GLOBAL
**DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
INDEX**

Category		Indicators	Scoring	SDGs
Sustainable Development Goals	SO-1	Is the city's sustainability strategy aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals	Yes = 4 Points	
	SO-2	What is the countries performance at implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals on the UN SDG Index	>80 - 4 Points 70 - 80 - 3 Points 60 - 70 - 2 Points 50 - 60 - 1 Point <50 - Points	
Corruption	SO-4	What is the country's score and ranking on the Corruption Perception Index?	90 -100 - 4 points 75-89 - 3 points 50-74 - 2 points 30-49 - 1 point	
Social Progress	SO-3	What is the city's score and ranking on the Social Progress Index? If the city's score is not available then select the region, and if not available then the country score	Tier 1 - 5 Points Tier 2 - 4 Points Tier 3 - 3 Points Tier 4 - 2 Points Tier 5 - 1 Point Tier 6 - 0 Points	 
	SO-5	What is the city's score and ranking on "Personal Safety" on the Social Progress Index? If the city's score is not available then select the region, and if not available then the country score	90 -100 - 4 points 75-90 - 3 points 50-75 - 2 points 25-50 - 1 point 0-24 - 0 points	
	SO-6	What is the city's score and ranking on "Access to Information and Communications" on the Social Progress Index? If the city's score is not available then select the region, and if not available then the country score	90 -100 - 4 points 75-90 - 3 points 50-75 - 2 points 25-50 - 1 point 0-24 - 0 points	  

	SO-7	What is the city's score and ranking on "Health and Wellness" on the Social Progress Index? If the city's score is not available then select the region, and if not available then the country score	90 -100 - 4 points 75-90 - 3 points 50-75 - 2 points 25-50 - 1 point 0-24 - 0 points	
	SO-8	What is the city's score and ranking on "Inclusiveness" on the Social Progress Index? If the city's score is not available then select the region, and if not available then the country score	90 -100 - 4 points 75-90 - 3 points 50-75 - 2 points 25-50 - 1 point 0-24 - 0 points	 
Transportation	SO-9	Is the destinations public transport system adapted to support accessibility for people with disabilities?	Yes = 2 Points	 
Over-tourism	SO-10	Annual number of overnight stays	Not scored	 



Supplier Performance



Category		Indicators	Scoring
Hotel	SU-1	What percentage of the destination's medium and large hotel room inventory has an active 3rd party sustainability certification? <i>Please provide a list showing the name of the certifications and total number of rooms for each of the certified hotels that have more than 50 rooms. Please consider all hotels in your destination, but omit non-hotel accommodations such as hostels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, etc.</i>	> 80% - 4 points 50% > 79% - 3 points 25% > 49% - 2 points 10% > 24% - 1 point Less than 10% - 0 points
	SU-2	Are there any destination wide policies, initiatives or programmes in place for hotels to reduce single-use non-recyclable/non-biodegradable material waste? E.g., plastic bags, water bottles, styrofoam. Please explain	Yes - 2 points No - 0 points
	SU-3	What percentage of the destination's hotel room inventory is easily accessible (within 30mins) by public transport to/from the congress and exhibition centre(s)? <i>Please consider all hotels (50+ rooms) in your destination, but omit non-hotel accommodations such as hostels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, etc.</i>	> 80% - 3 points 50% > 79% - 2 points 25% > 49% - 1 point < 24% - 0 points
Airport	SU-4	What percentage of the destination's key airport(s) have a current third-party certification (ie ISO14001) for its management of sustainability? <i>Please calculate an average if there is more than one airport</i>	> 80% - 3 points 50% > 79% - 2 points 25% > 49% - 1 point < 24% - 0 points
	SU-5	What percentage of the destination's key airports are carbon neutral for their direct emissions (not flights)? <i>Please calculate an average if there is more than one airport</i>	> 80% - 3 points 50% > 79% - 2 points 25% > 49% - 1 point < 24% - 0 points
Agencies	SU-6	What percentage of partner PCOs and DMCs located in the destination (over 5 full-time employees) have a formal written sustainability policy? <i>Please list the agency names</i>	> 80% - 4 points 50% > 79% - 3 points 25% > 49% - 2 points 10% > 24% - 1 point Less than 10% - 0 points

	SU-7	What percentage of partner PCOs and DMCs located in the destination (over 5 full-time employees) have an active third party sustainability certification? Please list agency names and specify the certification	> 80% - 4 points 50% > 79% - 3 points 25% > 49% - 2 points 10% > 24% - 1 point Less than 10% - 0 points
Restaurants	SU-9	Are there destination wide policies, initiatives or programmes in place for restaurants and caterers to reduce single-use non-recyclable/non-biodegradable material waste? E.g. plastic bags, water bottles, styrofoam	Yes - 2 point No - 0 points
	SU-10	Are there destination wide policies, initiatives or programmes in place for restaurants and/or F&B suppliers to reduce food waste?	Yes - 2 point No - 0 points
	SU-11	Does the destination have a program promoting and supporting restaurants and caterers with a commitment to sustainable food? E.g. organic, locally sourced, vegetarian options	Yes - 2 point No - 0 points
	SU-12	Does the destination promote and incentivise third party certification for restaurants and caterers with a commitment to sustainable food? E.g. organic, locally sourced, vegetarian options	Yes - 2 point No - 0 points
Venues	SU-13	What percentage of the destination's congress and exhibition centres have active third-party sustainability certification? Please provide a list with the name of the certification for each of the certified venues.	> 80% - 4 points 50% > 79% - 3 points 25% > 49% - 2 points 10% > 24% - 1 point Less than 10% - 0 points
Academia	SU-14	The destinations universities, colleges and hospitality schools have integrated sustainability into their undergraduate event management curriculum. If there is more than one school, please calculate an average for all schools that qualify	> 80% - 3 points 50% > 79% - 2 points 25% > 49% - 1 point < 24% - 0 points
	SU-15	The destinations universities colleges and hospitality schools have integrated sustainability into their postgraduate (e.g. masters) event management curriculum. If there is more than one school, please calculate an average for all schools that qualify	> 80% - 3 points 50% > 79% - 2 points 25% > 49% - 1 point < 24% - 0 points



Destination Management Performance



Category		Indicators	Scoring
Strategy	DM-1	Has the destination established a clear compelling long term vision and plan (+3 years) for an improved future state of sustainability of the meeting and events sector? Please select all that apply	
		<i>Sustainability vision established for meetings and events</i>	Yes -2 points No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainability vision established for tourism</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-2	Does the destination strategy include SMART objectives, management approach and KPIs for <u>social issues</u>? Please select all that apply	
		<i>SMART objectives</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-3	Does the destination strategy include SMART objectives, management approach and KPIs for <u>environmental issues</u>? Please select all that apply	
		<i>SMART objectives</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-4	Does the destination strategy include SMART objectives, management approach and KPIs for <u>economic issues</u>? Please select all that apply	
		<i>SMART objectives</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-5	Is the destination strategy aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?	Yes -3 points No - 0 points
	DM-6	Was the strategy developed with widespread stakeholder consultation? Please select all that apply	
<i>Consultation with key industry partners (hotels, venues, agencies)</i>		Yes - 1 point No - 0 points	

		<i>Consultation with event attendees</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Consultation with clients</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Consultation with key local government departments</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Consultation with citizens</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-7	Has the sustainability strategy been developed, reviewed or updated in the last 3 years?	Yes - 2 points No - 0 points
Policy & Certification	DM-8	Does the DMO have a documented sustainability policy signed by the most senior Executive support, that defines the organisation's vision, commitment and key goals on sustainability.	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-9	Does the DMO have a sustainable procurement policy that clearly defines procurement/purchasing practices and expectations/requirements from suppliers	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-10	Does the DMO or CVB hold a current third party sustainability certification for its own event and/or office operations or is in the formal process of obtaining one? Please identify certification (ie. ISO20121, Green Globe, EarthCheck, Greenkey, Local). If in the process of obtaining one please supply relevant documentation.	
		<i>Certification obtained and valid</i>	Yes - 2 points No - 0 points
		<i>Certification in formal process</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-11	Does the destination hold a current third party sustainable destination certification or is in the formal process of obtaining one? Please identify certification (ie Green Destinations, Green Globe, EarthCheck, or Biosphere.). If in the process of obtaining one please supply relevant documentation.	
		<i>Certification obtained and valid</i>	Yes - 2 points No - 0 points
<i>Certification in formal process</i>		Yes - 1 point No - 0 points	
Governance	DM-12	How does the destination manage the development and governance of the destination sustainability program? Please indicate all that apply	
		<i>Internal sustainability team / committee?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Dedicated sustainability manager?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points

		Committee with external industry stakeholders (e.g., venues, hotels)?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		Committee with external non-industry stakeholders (e.g.: NGOs, authorities or clients)?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
Staff Engagement & Capacity Building	DM-13	Do new and existing staff in the DMO receive periodic guidance and training regarding the sustainability strategy, including their roles and responsibilities in its' delivery? Please indicate all that apply	
		<i>all new staff are trained</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>all existing staff have been trained, and must be retrained/updated every 2 years</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-14	Has the destination supported or organised sustainability training for meetings and events suppliers in the last year (ie. hotels, venues, F&B, production companies)?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-15	Has the destination supported or organised sustainability training for meetings and events organisers in the last year?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-16	Does the destination provide incentives or funding for clients wanting to increase sustainability performance? Please specify	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-17	Does the destination provide incentives or funding for organisations suppliers wanting to increase sustainability performance? Please specify	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
Measurement and Reporting	DM-18	Does the destination have an up to date system (reviewed in last 2 years) to measure, monitor and report on environmental, economic, and social within events and tourism? Please indicate all that apply	
		<i>Active monitoring and reporting of positive and negative economic impacts and issues.</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Active monitoring and reporting of social impacts and issues.</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Active monitoring and reporting of environmental impacts and issues.</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-19	Does the destination report on sustainable destination strategy AND performance? Please select all that apply and provide a copy or link to supporting information.	
		<i>Sustainability strategy and performance data published annually on CVB/DMOs website?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainability strategy and performance data included in Annual CVB Report?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Annual Sustainability Report published by DMO/CVB which includes details of sustainability strategy and performance data</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points

		<i>Sustainability reporting shows progress of strategy and performance against the Sustainable Development Goals</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainability reporting produced using GRI, CDP, SASB, IIRC or similar reporting criteria?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainability report is audited by a third party.</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
Sales and Marketing	DM-20	Does the CVB/DMO website provide information about the destination’s sustainability strategy, performance, initiatives, features, suppliers and best practice (Must be available in English and Local language as a minimum)? Please list all that apply and add a link to the website	
		<i>Destination's sustainability strategy and approach</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Destination's sustainability performance against KPIs</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainable event guides and manuals</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Sustainability information about key hotels and venues</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Best practice examples and stories</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-21	Does the DMO/CVB promote local businesses and initiatives that support social innovation and development of local sustainable products and services?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-22	When exhibiting at tradeshow, are booths, exhibitions stands and signage made from sustainable materials, reused and recycled? <i>Please select one answer</i>	
		<i>Always</i>	Yes - 2 points
		<i>Sometimes</i>	Yes - 1 point
	DM-23	Does the CVB/DMO provide information about the destination’s sustainability strategy, performance, features, suppliers and best practice in its RFP responses and sales information? Please select one answer	
		<i>Always</i>	Yes - 2 points
		<i>Sometimes</i>	Yes - 1 point

Client Support	DM-24	Does the destination have a programme to incentivize visitors to use public transport for conventions and congresses? Please select one	
		<i>Free Public Transport for all convention and congress visitors?</i>	Yes - 1 point
		<i>Discounted Public Transport for all convention and congress visitors?</i>	Yes - 1 point
		<i>Free or Discounted Public Transport for SOME conventions and congresses</i>	Yes - 1 point
Accessibility	DM-25	Does Destination supply a list of places of interest, transport lines, hotels / venues that supports visitors with accessibility challenges to navigate in the destination, participating more easily in events? Please explain	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-26	Does the DMO promote the use of soft mobility forms of transport (ie walking, public transport, bicycles) to event organisers and participants?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
Community Action & Collaboration	DM-27	Does the DMO provide clients with ideas and resources to support local community causes and projects (social or environmental)? Please select all that apply and explain.	
		<i>Donation programs for food?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>Donation programs for leftover event materials?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
		<i>List of organisations who can offer CSR programmes and volunteering opportunities for events participants and visitors?</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-28	Does the destination offer a carbon offsetting program to visitors and/or event organisers?	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	DM-29	Does the DMO/CVB collaborate internationally with other DMOs in developing and developed countries to share knowledge and experiences, and help them improve their sustainability programmes? Please describe	
		<i>Collaboration with developed countries</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points
	<i>Collaboration with developing countries</i>	Yes - 1 point No - 0 points	