



Best Practices Questionnaire

To improve your operations and reduce your environmental impact, it helps to establish a benchmark against which to measure future progress. Reviewing the following questions will help you assess current practices and generate ideas for improvements. Invite staff into this process and work with them to set goals and timelines.

Reduce Environmental Impact

- What specific measures have we instituted to reduce our generation of waste and promote reuse and recycling? Do we compost food scraps, recycle all materials that are collected in our area, and find parties interested in reusing items we no longer need? Have we installed water-saving devices and energy-efficient lighting and instituted policies to reduce idling/lower thermostats and save fuel? Do we purchase in bulk wherever possible to minimize wasteful packaging?
- What measures do we take to inform guests/clients about low-impact practices (*e.g.*, tips on reducing water use, clearly marked areas for recycling, and stickers by light switches that encourage energy conservation)? Do we communicate our environmental expectations clearly and consistently?
- In trips we offer, what limits do we set for group size and do these adequately protect the places we visit and the experience of others (human and non-human) in those places? Are all our practices respectful of wildlife, seeking to minimize intrusion and disruption of their habitats? Do we restrict our travel to established trails and campsites? Do we minimize use of campfires, seek permits and build only in designated fire rings?
- Do we work to ensure that the places we visit are left better than when we arrived—with nothing removed from the site save for trash or debris left by previous visitors?
- Have any individuals (either program participants or passersby) commented on our practices and impact? How might we address their concerns?

Use Resources Sustainably

- What measures have we taken to limit our direct and indirect consumption of nonrenewable fuels? Have we calculated our annual “carbon footprint” and begun taking steps to reduce it?
- Have we signed up with a clean provider of electricity?
- Have we explored opportunities to use biodiesel (from waste fryolator oil) for heating and transportation?
- Do we use phone conferencing and facilitate carpooling among staff and program participants to minimize solo and small-group driving? Do we consider fuel consumption in decisions regarding employee travel?
- Do we seek out locally produced goods and organic foods (both of which minimize reliance on fossil fuels)?
- Do we minimize use of paper products in all our operations?

Provide Skilled Leadership

- Do all our employees hold the necessary licenses and certifications for their roles? What incentives do we provide for their professional development?
- Do all our work practices adhere to local, regional and federal laws? What training do we provide to ensure that employees are kept current on applicable rules and regulations?
- Do our employees receive adequate safety and first aid training?
- Does our business or organization have established protocols for all leaders (*e.g.*, in terms of preparing trip itineraries, gathering participant medical information, planning for emergencies, and orienting clients)?
- Do we have a staff-mentoring program allowing newcomers to receive support and guidance from more experienced staff?
- Do our staff members participate in broader associations that provide professional support and valuable informational exchanges?
- Do we work to ensure that our programs inform people about Maine's cultural and natural history and inspire in them a deeper connection to place?
- Do we support skill building in staff to ensure that they are competent and enthusiastic interpreters?

Act with Professional Integrity

- Do we involve our staff in decision-making and seek to make our company or organization a role model within the industry?
- Does our pre-registration material thoroughly and accurately portray what we offer and fully disclose to prospective clients/guests all the information they should know?
- Do we have and routinely review with staff protocols and procedures necessary to ensure the safety and well being of clients/guests and the careful stewardship of our natural environment?
- Do we have clear standards of conduct and train staff adequately in this realm?
- Do we budget and plan adequately for equipment maintenance and replacement?
- Do we inspire others by example, demonstrating our environmental and social values through our personal conduct and professional services?

Give Back to Place

- In what ways do we contribute to the well being of the communities in which we work (*e.g.*, buying from local suppliers, hiring locally, providing in-kind and charitable contributions and doing service projects)?
- Do we work to foster awareness and encourage conservation of natural and cultural resources within the local community?
- Do we commit a portion of our pre-tax earnings to local causes and organizations? Do we inform clients/guests about local needs and initiatives and invite them to consider ways they can give back to place?
- Do we articulate our own commitment to "buying local" and encourage others to do the same? Do we help inform clients/guests about what is made locally and where these products can be found?