



APPLICATION: 2023 UFI Sustainability Development Award

1. Company Name and Title of the Entry:

Miami Beach Convention Center: Sustainability: Food Waste Reduction, Composting and Donations Program

2. Contact:

Ariane Hildebrand
Director of Marketing and External Relations
Miami Beach Convention Center
1901 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, FL, 33139, USA
ariane_hildebrand@miamibeachconvention.com

3. Quick background, nature, and general objectives of the program:

The Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is the centerpiece to Miami Beach’s meetings, conventions, and tradeshow industries. Re-imagined from 2015-2020, following a \$640-million-dollar renovation, the expanded MBCC includes a new 60,000 square-foot Grand Ballroom, almost 500,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space, an expanded Grand Lobby, pre-function areas that are bathed in natural light, up to 84 breakout rooms, approximately 800 roof deck parking spaces. The team at nationally acclaimed Fentress Architects and Architectonica has collaborated to create state-of-the-art sustainable design and eco-conscious operational procedures. Builders used recycled materials throughout the building, with more than 20 percent of materials sourced locally in Miami and Florida. Ninety six percent of construction waste is recycled, and the project has so far diverted more than 38,000 tons of waste recycling.

The MBCC is surrounded by elegant architectural “fins” that are both beautiful and functional, providing sun-shading along the exterior perimeter of the building. The specially designed fin-like structures reduce the heat inside the facility, and bay lighting takes advantage of natural sunlight, high-efficiency units, and LED bulbs. This new design reduces energy consumption by 20 percent. To reduce electrical consumption, the new MBCC relies on daylight in public spaces. The MBCC installed high efficiency LED lighting throughout the ballrooms, meeting rooms and public spaces. New occupancy light sensors throughout the building also reduce electricity consumption by automatically turning off lights in meeting rooms and ballrooms when the spaces are not in use. The MBCC is proud to have LEED® Silver Certification.

The reimagined Miami Beach Convention Center (MBCC) is committed to supporting sustainability and climate change actions as part of its corporate social responsibility program, as well as resiliency initiatives in the City of Miami Beach and Miami Dade County by incorporating environmentally friendly building features and sustainable business practices for all meetings, tradeshows, events, conferences, and conventions held at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

The MBCC has developed a “Sustainability Fact Sheet” to educate clients, attendees and the community about all efforts and we share our progress on our website, social media and through PR.

See [Sustainability Fact Sheet](#).

The Miami Beach Convention Center hosts various events throughout the year, with some being the biggest meetings, conventions, and tradeshow in the U.S. With all the food that comes in and out of the convention center on a daily basis, Sodexo Live!, our exclusive food service provider, and OVG360 venue management have developed a comprehensive initiative to implement a food waste reduction program including a new composting initiative and a number of sustainability measures to help the environment, our community, and our events to become more sustainable and to meet our industry’s future “zero waste” goal.



4. Detailed Description

Sodexo Live!, the exclusive food service provider for the MBCC, embraces sustainable solutions in line with the City’s resiliency goals. The company has hired sustainability consultant “Astrapto” in 2022 to guide and train staff through the food waste reduction process.

Eco-friendly & Sustainable Food & Beverage Service

Serving tens of thousands of guests annually, Sodexo Live! employs eco-friendly service ware containing items made from both renewable resources and post-consumer recycled materials as well as compostable and biodegradable options and natural decor for catering functions. Sodexo Live! embraces waste reduction by designing menus that have plant-based options and reducing the carbon footprint as a core component of their business. Receptables at the MBCC’s food & beverage stations are made of cardboard and contribute to the “Single Stream” recycling process.

Food Donations Program

The local team gives back to the local community by donating tens of thousands of pounds of prepared but unused food annually to The Caring Place, Miami Rescue Mission, and Food Rescue Miami to both help others

and divert food waste from local landfills. The MBCC collaborates with Food Rescue US. to utilize their mobile app to list all the food left over after a function. The app then connects us with charities in the area who are looking for food donations for a particular location. The MBCC then repackages the food such as Danishes, fruits, muffins, etc. and sends it off to be put to good use. Between the months of March through December of 2022, we donated approximately **4,000 pounds** of food plus 23,040 water bottles. Some of the local organizations we have donated to include Miami Rescue Mission, Camillus House, the Chapman Partnership and more.

Introducing a Composting Program

Sodexo Live! at the MBCC embarked on a composting partnership with a local composting provider for its organic, plant-based waste from meetings and conventions. This program allows food waste to go back to the soil, support local farmers, protect biodiversity and fight climate change. When food is considered no longer suitable for consumption, it goes towards [Compost for Life](#), a South Florida organization that picks up scraps at the MBCC twice a week to turn into compost. From the launch of the composting program in May 2022 to February 2023, we have already composted over **32,651 pounds** of food that was diverted from landfills.

The MBCC partners with Compost for Life to educate convention attendees about composting. At this year's [Aspen Ideas: Climate](#) Conference held at the Miami Beach Convention Center in March 2023, Compost for Life set up a booth in the lunch function area showcasing the composting journey. Composting bins including detailed instructions were placed around the event and meetings rooms.



New Herb and Vegetable Garden

In February 2022, Chef Samantha worked with the back-of-house staff to build an herb & vegetable garden next to Rum Room (new restaurant) on the Miami Beach Convention Center Campus, which began as a project to drive more sustainable practices in the kitchen. The garden currently holds 192 square feet of herb and vegetable beds and consists of organic soil mixed with compost from the convention center's composting program. The vegetables harvested will be used on the Rum Room and Venu menus at the MBCC and foliage will be added to table garnishes and decorations. Solar powered lights were installed on the wooden fence surrounding the garden.



CONVENTIONS C.A.R.E Event Donations

The Miami Beach Convention Center, its partners, and contractors, invite show organizers and attendees to participate in the “Conventions C.A.R.E” donation program to give back to the local community in Miami Beach and Miami-Dade County as part of the MBCC’s commitment to corporate social responsibility.

While these shows and events produce millions of dollars in economic impact, they also often leave behind products which can be reused to benefit local non-profit organizations. The MBCC has launched a program called Conventions C.A.R.E. (Community Assistance by Responsible Events). The goal of C.A.R.E. is twofold, to benefit the non-profit community and to help the environment. In the past, we have been able to donate pens, paper, bags, cosmetics and beauty supplies, non-perishable food and beverage, clothing, and furniture to needy charities throughout the Miami region. The program has taken in multiple pallets of donations from events in 2022 and distributed to local charities such as the Education Fund.

Single Stream and Aluminum Recycling

Sorted and processed off-site, single stream recycling offers an easy and efficient path to recycling for show management, exhibitors, and attendees. This includes cardboard, paper, plastic, and aluminum cans. Identified recycle receptacles throughout the venue are clearly marked with “mixed recyclables” or “single stream recycling”. 40 separate receptacles for aluminum cans are located throughout the venue and serviced by the provider “Replenish”.

Plastic-Free Miami Beach

The MBCC is also supportive of the City of Miami Beach’s plastic-free campaigns. Plastic water bottle have been replaced with aluminum cans in all onsite vending machines and concession stands. Water bottle refill stations are also available throughout the MBCC to reduce plastic water bottle consumption.

5. Lessons Learnt & Next Steps

Our venue management company OVG360 and our F&B provider Sodexo Live! connect monthly via our internal CSR/Sustainability Committee to discuss all sustainability efforts at the MBCC and how we can improve waste reduction and donations processes. After events such as Aspen Ideas Climate, Miami International Boat Show, all Informa Markets and Reed Exhibition events we track all energy, waste, composting, recycling, and donations data and make this available to the clients. We analyze what can be improved for future events together with our clients, community service providers and charities (Compost For Life, Waste Management, Replenish, Food Rescue etc.), and our community and hospitality partners such as the City of Miami Beach and the Greater Miami Conventions & Visitors Bureau.

We learned in the past year, that there are still many opportunities to implement more effective waste sorting in the front of the house and the back of the house. We are considering improved signage for attendees, more separate bins on the show floor, sustainability stations with attendees who help sort food waste from plates, bringing in the “green teams” from local universities as volunteers for events, and working with all providers to only allow utensils, plates and cups that are 100% recyclable or compostable so that we can reach “zero food and food service waste” soon. The MBCC is also currently working on publishing an official “Sustainability Policy” for staff, show management, exhibitors, vendors, service providers, and attendees.

The MBCC’s CSR/Sustainability Committee staff members are currently going through the Event Industry Council’s (EIC) Sustainability Certificate program and while several staff members have obtained the “Sustainable Events Professional Certificate” (SEPC) in 2022, the MBCC is next going through the “Sustainable Standards Certificate” program to obtain the “Foundations Certificate” in May 2023 and then apply for Bronze/Silver/Gold/Platinum status soon thereafter. The MBCC is also hiring a dedicated Marketing & Sustainability Coordinator to help with this process. In addition, the MBCC is planning on implementing OVG360’s GOAL program (a platform to accelerate sustainability efforts with the GOAL of reducing carbon footprints) and continuing with the “Astrapto” sustainability consultant.

