Your Guide to Planning Sustainable Events
Making Events Meaningful for Your Business, Community, and Planet

WHAT'S INSIDE	**Step-by-Step Planning:** Clear actions to make your events eco-friendly. **Real-Life Examples:** Inspiring success stories from sustainable events. **Pro Tips:** Expert advice to reduce waste, cut emissions, and save costs. **Resource Recommendations:** Tools and tips for venues, catering, and suppliers. **Evaluation Checklist:** Measure impact and improve for future events.

Getting Started

Planning an event is a chance to showcase your values and commitment to sustainability. With the right strategies, you can create memorable gatherings that leave a positive impact. This guide breaks down the process with practical examples to inspire action.

☐ Define Your Sustainability Goals

Why it Matters: Goals clarify priorities and help you measure success.

Key Actions:

- Decide what's most important: waste reduction, energy conservation, or community impact.
- Align goals with your business or organization's values.
- Set measurable targets. For example:
  - *Reduce event waste by 50% compared to last year*.
  - *Source 80% of materials locally*.

Example:

A tech conference wanted to minimize plastic waste. They set a goal to eliminate single-use plastics entirely, replacing water bottles with hydration stations and distributing reusable bottles to attendees.

☐ Choose a Sustainable Venue

Why it Matters: The venue can influence energy use, waste management, and attendee travel.

Key Actions:

- Select venues with green certifications like LEED or BREEAM.
- Look for venues that offer renewable energy sources or efficient water use systems.
- Ensure accessibility by public transport.

Example:

The Barbican Centre in London is a sustainable venue offering a robust recycling system, eco-friendly catering options, and renewable energy initiatives.

☐ Go Digital

Why it Matters: Paperless solutions reduce waste and streamline communication.

Key Actions:

- Replace printed programs with event apps or downloadable PDFs.
- Use QR codes for menus, schedules, and speaker bios.
- Host hybrid events to minimize travel emissions.

Example:

A non-profit used an event app that allowed attendees to view session schedules, connect with speakers, and share feedback—all paper-free.

☐ Minimize Waste

Why it Matters: Preventing waste reduces environmental harm and lowers disposal costs.

Key Actions:

- Replace disposable items with compostable or reusable options.
- Set up waste sorting stations with clear signage.

- Donate leftover food to local shelters or compost it.

Example:

At a food festival, organizers partnered with a local composting company to collect food scraps, turning waste into nutrient-rich soil.

☐ Source Sustainable Catering

Why it Matters: Catering choices have a big impact on your event's footprint.

Key Actions:

- Offer a plant-forward menu to reduce emissions from meat production.
- Choose local, organic, and seasonal ingredients.
- Eliminate bottled water; use water dispensers instead.

Example:

A corporate retreat in Devon served a locally sourced vegetarian menu, saving 200 kg of CO2 emissions compared to a meat-heavy menu.

☐ Collaborate with Eco-Friendly Suppliers

Why it Matters: Sustainable partnerships amplify your event's impact.

Key Actions:

- Research suppliers' green policies (transport, packaging, and materials).
- Rent equipment instead of buying to reduce resource use.
- Partner with local businesses to boost the community.

Example:

A book launch used locally crafted wooden stands for displays, rented instead of purchased, from a sustainable design company.

☐ Measure and Offset Carbon Emissions

Why it Matters: Accountability fosters trust and inspires improvement.

Key Actions:

- Use tools like the *Carbon Trust Calculator* to measure emissions.
- Offset your footprint by funding renewable energy projects or reforestation efforts.
- Communicate your impact transparently to stakeholders.

Example:

An international NGO calculated travel emissions from attendees and funded a mangrove planting project to offset 100% of the carbon generated.

☐ **Engage and Educate Attendees**

Why it Matters: Your audience can become ambassadors for sustainability.

Key Actions:

- Share your event's green initiatives through social media and pre-event communications.
- Provide educational materials about reducing their own carbon footprints.
- Offer eco-friendly takeaways like reusable tote bags or bamboo utensils.

Example:

A university conference provided attendees with digital guides on reducing single-use plastics in their daily lives, receiving positive feedback for the effort.

☐ Evaluate and Improve

Why it Matters: Learning from each event helps you build a stronger sustainability plan.

Key Actions:

- Survey attendees to gather feedback on green initiatives.
- Review your performance against the set goals.
- Document lessons learned and update your planning checklist.

Example:

After a hybrid event, organizers found 40% of attendees preferred digital programs. They decided to eliminate printed materials entirely for future events.

Pro Tips

Expert Advice to Reduce Waste, Cut Emissions, and Save Costs

Take your sustainable event to the next level with these insider tips:

- **Plan Ahead:** Avoid last-minute purchases that may not align with your sustainability goals.
- **Optimize Attendance:** Use tools like RSVP tracking to minimize over-ordering food and materials.
- **Rent Over Buy:** Opt for rentals for furniture, decor, and equipment to reduce waste and storage needs.
- **Encourage Green Travel:** Provide incentives for carpooling, public transport, or cycling to the event.
- **Partner Strategically:** Work with suppliers offering discounts for sustainable choices, like bulk orders or reusable items.

Evaluation Checklist

Measure Impact and Improve for Future Events

Before the Event: Preparation and Planning

☐ **Define Clear Sustainability Goals**

- Example: Reduce waste by 50%, achieve zero carbon emissions, or minimize single-use plastics.

☐ **Communicate Goals and Expectations to Your Team and Suppliers**

- Ensure everyone understands sustainability targets and is aligned on responsibilities.

☐ **Select a Sustainable Venue and Confirm Its Green Policies**

- Choose venues with certifications such as LEED or Green Key, and ensure they have

sustainable practices in place.

☐ **Identify Local and Eco-Friendly Suppliers for Catering, Decor, and Materials**

- Source local, organic food and eco-conscious decor items to reduce your environmental footprint.

☐ **Develop a Waste Management Plan with Clear Sorting Stations (Recycling, Compost, Landfill)**

- Implement waste separation at the venue with clearly marked bins and instructions for proper disposal.

Materials and Resources

☐ **Use Digital Invitations, Programs, and Communications to Minimize Paper Use**

- Replace printed materials with digital options like emails, apps, or QR codes for schedules and event details.

☐ **Source Reusable or Compostable Items (Tableware, Decor, etc.)**

- Opt for durable items that can be reused (e.g., plates, cutlery) or compostable alternatives to reduce waste.

☐ **Partner with Organizations for Food Donation or Composting Leftovers**

- Collaborate with local charities for food donation or set up a composting system for food waste.

Attendee Engagement

☐ **Share Event Sustainability Efforts Through Pre-Event Emails or Social Media**

- Communicate your sustainability goals and encourage attendees to be part of the effort (e.g., using reusable items, traveling green).

☐ **Encourage Attendees to Use Green Transportation (Carpooling, Public Transport)**

- Provide transportation options like carpooling, shuttles, or promote public transport routes to reduce emissions.

☐ **Provide Reusable or Digital Materials to Replace Single-Use Items**

- Offer reusable water bottles, tote bags, or digital materials instead of disposable items.

Carbon Footprint Considerations

☐ **Estimate the Event's Carbon Footprint Using Tools Like Carbon Trust or MyClimate**

- Use online tools to estimate your event's carbon footprint and assess emissions from

travel, energy use, and other sources.

☐ **Plan to Offset Emissions Through Verified Programs (e.g., Tree Planting, Renewable Energy)**

- Offset your carbon emissions by supporting verified programs such as tree planting or renewable energy investments.

During the Event: Execution and Monitoring

☐ **Monitor Waste Management**

- Ensure all waste stations are in use and being correctly sorted, with a staff member assigned to monitor the process.

☐ **Promote Energy Efficiency**

- Turn off unused equipment, use energy-efficient lighting, and optimize heating or cooling.

☐ **Encourage Sustainable Behavior**

- Remind attendees through signage or announcements about sustainability efforts (e.g., using refill stations, taking public transport).

☐ **Track Food and Beverage Waste**

- Monitor food consumption to avoid over-ordering and minimize leftovers. Implement systems for redistributing excess food or composting.

☐ **Offer Green Alternatives**

- Ensure options for water refill stations, plant-based food, and sustainable giveaways are available throughout the event.

Post-Event: Evaluation and Improvement

☐ **Evaluate Waste Outputs**

- Measure the amount of waste generated and how much was diverted to recycling, composting, and landfill.

☐ **Assess Carbon Footprint**

- Review your carbon emissions and calculate any necessary offsets. Track how much was offset through programs like tree planting or renewable energy.

☐ **Gather Feedback from Attendees, Team, and Suppliers**

- Collect insights on how sustainability efforts were received and areas for improvement for future events.

☐ **Analyze Event Impact**

- Assess the success of your sustainability goals (e.g., waste reduction, reduced emissions) and document results.

☐ **Report Sustainability Achievements**

- Share the event's sustainability impact with attendees and the public through email newsletters, social media, or an official report.

☐ **Identify Areas for Improvement**

- Review feedback and metrics to refine and improve your sustainability practices for future events.

☐ **Thank Stakeholders**

- Acknowledge and thank your team, suppliers, and attendees for their role in making the event sustainable.