

Sustainable Sharing Series

Sustainable Events and Conferences

Events are an integral part of the way institutions interact with each other and learn best practice, they are an excellent opportunity to build relationships, network and find out what others are doing. Due to their very nature they can become quite prone to producing a lot of waste, increasing emissions due to travel for delegates to attend. There are ways to mitigate the negative impact of events and ensure they are as interactive as possible too.



Challenges

There are common challenges across institutions, delegates and service providers at events, some of these include:

- Lack of awareness of Sustainable issues
- Lack of knowledge on what is possible to mitigate issues
- Organisations who stand to gain customers or financial benefits from attending can generate unnecessary waste from gimmicks and giveaways
- Participants and delegate expectations of events

Some Solutions for organisers

- Keep décor to a minimum and reuse items wherever possible
- Decide if events would work as virtual webinars or with virtual elements to reduce travel, collateral and printing
- Reduce parking options and encourage the use of public transport and active travel options, the more information provided to delegates the more likely they are to use more sustainable modes of transport
- Introduce the idea of virtual gifts, experiences or vouchers for example
- Vegetarian menus that are both locally and seasonally sourced should be considered
- Ensure you are using all available resources, find out what items might be available to re-use or hire instead of buying new
- Using online platforms and information sharing systems, like apps and websites
- Keep delegates informed and set expectations in advance of the event, make them aware of the sustainable ethos and ask them to be prepared to contribute to this, examples for this would be:
 - Downloading event apps in advance of the event
 - Brining along their own water bottle and reusable cup
 - Let them know about the facilities that will be in place, like recycling bins etc.
 - Ask them to consider their transport options and consider using a car share scheme

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Suggestions on working with suppliers or collaborators

When working on an event, organisers should put guidelines in place to help suppliers and collaborators understand that Sustainability is an issue that needs to be considered. There are various ideas to help them to think and act more sustainably

- Put some specific guidelines in place, things to consider and expectations as well as best practice guides
- Make compliance with sustainability protocols mandatory and part of your working contracts together
- Ensure guides and protocols are easily available and ensure your suppliers are aware of where they can access these and what help is available
- Offer to help suppliers to formulate their sustainability policies, and work with them
- Create a physical presence at events to showcase sustainable achievements
- Help to facilitate collaboration between suppliers, sharing best practice as well as resources
- Discuss and feedback learnings from previous events and Annual events

Reducing Waste

- Remind exhibitors or suppliers that the conversations around promotional material are more important than the materials themselves, help them find ways to engage delegates without giving them freebies, especially items with limited lifespan
- Reduce paper waste by asking delegates to bring their own paper and pens, and using alternative way of displaying information, for example: screens, apps, websites and taking pictures of information are all ways of reducing paper waste
- Re-usable crockery and cutlery is best from an environmental perspective, however there are times when this simply isn't achievable

Cups

- Re-usable cups are best as they are less likely to get thrown out
- Where compostable cups are used, please bear in mind that waste bins need to be very clearly labelled, as do the cups themselves.
- Compostable cups are not all suitable to go into food waste bins and can cause more harm than good
- Compostable items are ideal where they are used throughout the event and it is clear they can be processed correctly
- Alternatively, you could have a 'waste police' monitoring and educating users about how best to dispose of items



Resources and Guides

[Jiscguide to virtual conferencing](#)

[Edinburgh Fringe Festival Sustainability Website](#)

Camilla Seeland Green Events Guide and delegate 'survival guide'

Draft Sustainability Protocol document

[Visit the EAUC Sharing Series](#)