

HOW TO: ORGANISE A GREEN EVENT

Greening an event can have two positive impacts. It increases the sustainability of your organisation, but it also makes the participants aware of the importance of sustainable actions. Use both pre-event communications and post-event evaluation and follow-up to tell participants that this is a green event and provide them with further information (this check list) if they are interested.

Before you start...

1. Is your event definitely needed?

Consider whether video (tele) conferencing, local workshops or a digitally broadcast lecture would work instead. If you decide that getting together in one place is essential, design a programme that makes the most of this! No snoozing in the back row... Use training workshops to share knowledge and skills, allow time and space for related meetings to be held, and give out any local resources to save posting them later.

Planning your event...

2. Transport

The distance and the available modes of transport are major determinants of how facilitators and participants travel and therefore their carbon footprint.

- Minimise travel during the planning stage, using alternative methods of communication;
- Choose location of event to minimise travel and facilitate public transport use;
- Provide comprehensive travel information, to include pedestrian/cycle routes from bus and train stations - work with the venue staff to find out about local transport options (encourage them to make the same information available to future clients);
- Organise group discounts well in advance to encourage train and bus use; encourage local branches to make group bookings for their members;
- Consider providing a coach service, if there is no good public transport available;
- Reduce the delegate fee for people travelling by public transport (or bike!)
- Try to organise conference sessions, socials and accommodation within walking distance of each other. Provide facilities for remote participation in the event (e.g. video link-up could allow contributions from overseas colleagues);
- Use tools, such as an online carbon calculator (see "L'EcoComparateur" provided by the French train company SNCF);
- Collect information from participants on how they travelled to the event. This will raise awareness and help you to plan future meetings.

3. Catering

Food and tableware are the two relevant items to look at. The carbon footprint of food and tableware is determined by its production, storage, transport and disposal.

- Liaise with the staff at the venue to request locally produced, seasonal food;
- Ask suppliers to minimise packaging, and take back the rest on delivery;
- Choose reusable tableware instead of disposable items;

- Offer jugs of tap water rather than bottled spring water;
- If juice or alcoholic drinks are included, try to source them as locally as possible too;
- Provide mainly vegetarian food (which is usually acceptable to all) with a vegan option – this will help to reduce the carbon footprint
- Avoid highly processed food (which also has a higher carbon footprint);
- Liaise with venue staff about recycling of food waste and other disposable items;
- Inform the attendees of the sustainable procurement and provision of the food – if possible, label the dishes.

4. Venue

- Ask for a copy of the venue sustainability policy before booking – look out for sections on energy, transport, food and waste.
- Choose a venue with lots of natural light and air;
- Consider a venue where energy (heating, cooling and electricity) is provided partly or fully by renewable energy sources (at least asking about this will flag the issue for the venue managers);
- Consider a venue set in a natural environment, e.g. with a garden or a nearby park;
- Choose a location which provides cycle racks and changing facilities;
- Inform the manager of the venue about your commitment to sustainability and about options to make the venue more sustainable.

5. Equipment & Stationery

- Send pre-event information by email rather than hard copy;
- Avoid overprinting and duplicating documents provided during the event:
 - Use blackboards, whiteboards, projectors and posters rather than handouts;
 - Make presentations available by email or download rather than printing out;
 - Keep handouts short and relevant, print double-sided;
- Use recycled paper (including for any folders - if these are needed);
- Provide pencils or pens made out of recycled material.
- Re-use name tags

6. Involving delegates

- Keep delegates informed of your commitment to sustainability and your efforts at greening;
- Ask for their feedback: you could offer a prize or donation to charity for those who arrived by the greenest means, or put forward the most imaginative ideas for improving future events;
- Review the event programme: is there scope to include content on environmental aspects of the subject matter?
- Arrange an information stall – perhaps with a personal carbon footprinting service?
- Offer a bookswap or other opportunities to freecycle at the event;
- Put emphasis on reducing electricity usage, by turning off lights & projectors when not needed, etc. – include reminders in housekeeping notices;
- Provide sustainability guidelines to all event organisers.

If you are outsourcing the management of the event to a third party, simply hand them this list and get them to report to you on each of the above points.