

MINIMUM STANDARDS 2017



Sustainable Events

Minimum standards for providing and evaluating the sustainability performance of meetings, exhibitions, trade-shows, conferences or other events. This standard applies - but is not limited to, the organisation, management and monitoring of events.



Minimum Standards 2017

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

Overview:

These minimum standards are intended for providing and evaluating the sustainability performance of meetings, exhibitions, trade-shows, conferences or other events. This will include, but is not limited to, the organisation, management and monitoring of events.

This guideline focuses primarily on the management, reduction or elimination of environmental impacts associated with events.

Interpretations

For the purpose of this standard, the following interpretations apply:

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| “accreditation” | third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks |
| ‘accessibility’ | independent usability of a product, service, environment or facility by persons with a wide range of mobility or sensual limitations, either permanent or temporary in nature. |
| “attestation” | issue of a statement, based on a decision following review, that fulfilment of specified requirements has been demonstrated |
| “baseline” | a minimum or starting point used for comparisons |
| “benchmark” | a standard or point of reference against which performance may be compared or assessed. |
| “benefit” | monetary or non-monetary advantage (or both) |
| “best practice” | the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best result) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves successful over time for large numbers of people. |
| ‘carbon credit’ | a generic term for any tradable certificate or permit representing the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide or the mass of another greenhouse gas with a carbon dioxide equivalent (CO ₂ e) equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide. |
| “carbon emissions” | the release of carbon into the atmosphere as a result of the use or consumption of fossil fuel energy sources and carbon dioxide (CO ₂) as a result of human activity.’ |
| “carbon footprint” | the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation, or community. |
| “carbon-neutral event” | an event which has achieved net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset, or buying enough carbon credits to make up the difference. |
| “carbon offset” | a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere. |

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| “certification” | third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons |
| “client” | the person/entity on whose behalf the event has been organised or held and who is sustainable for the payment of services or products associated with the event. |
| “conformity assessment” | demonstration that specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person or body are fulfilled |
| “continual improvement” | a continual process by which the effectiveness or results of a process or activity are evaluated and improved upon |
| ‘contractor’ | a person or firm that undertakes to provide materials or labour to perform a service or do a job on behalf of another. |
| “corrective action” | action to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity or other undesirable situation |
| “delegate” | a participant (see ‘participant’) |
| “designated group” | as defined in the relevant national legislation (see foreword) |
| “documented” | a formalised recording of information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation |
| “event” | <p>a temporary gathering that brings people together at a particular time, in a particular place, for a particular purpose. An event may take the form of sporting, entertainment, recreational, religious, cultural, meetings, conference, exhibition, incentive, organisational or any other similar activities hosted at a stadium, a venue or within a prescribed area (including the virtual on-line space)</p> <p><i>(alt) a planned gathering with respect to time and place where an experience is created and/or a message is communicated</i></p> |
| “event greening” | a process by which an event is planned and undertaken by incorporating environmental considerations designed to minimise its negative impact on the environment. |
| “event management cycle” | stages and activities of an event (including products and services involved, from research, conception and planning through to implementation, review and post-event activities |
| “event organiser” | the person or organisation that produces and/or manages all or some of the activities associated with the event. |
| “event owner” | the client |
| “event sector” | as defined in the relevant national legislation |
| “general claim” | statement that is not independently verified. NOTE Some organisations often make this claim of their own accord. There is no verification behind this claim. |
| “interested party” | any person, organisation or stakeholder that can affect or be affected by a decision or activity |
| “legacy” | the enduring physical, economic, social or environmental impacts of an event |
| “local” | pertaining to the local area of the event or facility |
| “local area” | in the case of businesses located within urban areas, the local municipal area within which the business is located, and in the case of businesses located within rural areas, the district municipal area within which the business is located |

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| “local community” | all people who live in the local area of the event |
| ‘local economy’ | the economic activity within a defined community or area |
| “monitoring” | a process or activity designed to determine the status of a system, process or activity |
| “objective” | result to be achieved |
| ‘organiser’ | an individual sustainable for the planning, implementation and management of an event, usually as part of the event organising team or organisation |
| “organisation” | any person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives. |
| “outsourced” | any activity which is provided by an external party as part of an organisation’s function or process |
| “participant” | an organisation and/or individual that takes an active part in the activities of an event. This may include delegates, speakers, attendees, sub-contractors and suppliers. |
| “performance” | a measureable result |
| “policy” | the stated intentions or direction of an organisation or body |
| “persons with disabilities” | any person with permanent or temporary restriction of mobility or function |
| “responsible purchasing” | process in which organizations buy products and services that have a lesser or reduced negative effect and enhanced positive impact on human health and the natural, social, cultural and local economic environment when compared to other products and services that serve the same purpose |
| “responsible purchasing policy” | The formally stated overall intentions and direction of a company or individual on responsible purchasing |
| “review” | verification of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of selection and determination activities, and the results of these activities, with regard to fulfilment of specified requirements by an object of conformity assessment |
| “risk” | the combination of the likelihood of an activity and the severity of the consequences associated with the activity |
| ‘service provider’ | an organisation, business or individual which offers service to others in exchange for payment. |
| “specified requirement” | need or expectation that is stated |
| “standard” | a measure, norm, procedure or model used for common and repeated use of performance or comparative evaluation and approved by a recognised body. |
| “stewardship” | a responsibility for sustainable development shared by all those whose actions affect environmental performance, economic activity and social progress |
| “supplier” | any person or organisation providing products, services or facilities |
| “sustainability” | use of resources in an environmentally sustainable, socially just and economically viable manner, taking care of present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs |

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| “sustainable event” | an event management strategy in which the organiser and client take responsibility to protect and conserve the natural environment, respect and conserve local cultures and ways of life, and contribute to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local communities |
| “sustainable event policy” | the published and accessible stated overall intentions and direction of an organiser related to the sustainable planning, management and reporting of an event |
| “sustainability system” | management system that directs and controls an organization’s actions in management relation to sustainability |
| “target” | a detailed performance requirement that needs to be met in order to achieve the objective |

Minimum Standards

I. Sustainable Operations and Management Criteria

- a) The organiser and all service providers shall comply with all relevant national, provincial and local legislation, regulations, licences and permits, as may be required.
- b) The organiser shall
 - i. establish and communicate a **Sustainable Event Policy** that is suitable to the nature and scale of the event, and which shall consider all associated environmental, socio-cultural, economical, quality, health and safety issues.
 - ii. implement a sustainability management system that is suitable to the nature and scale of the event, and which addresses the associated environmental, socio-cultural, economical, quality, health, and safety issues.
 - iii. implement policies and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its sustainability actions. Such information should be used in the critical review of the sustainability management system and to encourage continual improvement.
 - iv. facilitate staff awareness of and training in its sustainable event policy.
 - v. make the sustainable event policy publicly available and provide information about its associated activities when requested by any interested or affected party.
 - vi. conduct internal monitoring at planned intervals to ensure the sustainability system is being implemented and applied effectively. This shall include recording all non-conformances and any incidents that may occur.
 - vii. invite participant and visitor feedback on the measures taken to ensure a sustainable event and shall take corrective action where appropriate.
- c) Promotional materials shall be accurate and complete, shall not promise more than can be delivered by the event and shall not make misleading claims regarding sustainability.

II. Social and Cultural Criteria

- a) Where an event takes place in, at or around any site of local historical, archaeological, cultural or spiritual importance, the organiser shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the event does not directly or indirectly negatively impact the site.
- b) The organiser shall ensure that where applicable, local communities or residents are provided reasonable, controlled access to sites of historical, social, cultural or religious significance that are located on the site of the venue.
- c) The activities of the event shall not jeopardise the provision of basic services, such as water, energy and sanitation, to neighbouring communities.
- d) The organisers shall ensure that the event recognises and respects the local traditions and cultural or religious beliefs of the affected community.
- e) The organiser shall ensure access and facilities for persons with disabilities and special needs.
- f) The organiser shall ensure support for local development initiatives in consultation with the people from the local area who are affected, as part of any event legacy.
- g) The organiser shall provide a code of behaviour for participants in respect of local cultural, historical and religious sites or communities. Such code shall be developed in conjunction with the affected parties.

III. Economic Criteria

- a) The organiser shall:
- i. provide temporary employment opportunities for people from the local area where this is possible or required.
 - ii. provide sustainability training opportunities for staff relevant to the event.
 - iii. demonstrate support for small enterprises wherever possible.
 - iv. ensure that employees are paid a fair wage and provided with fair working conditions for the event.
 - v. take reasonable steps to ensure that child labour, forced labour and sexual exploitation of any kind is avoided.
 - vi. report transparently on the application of a legacy initiative, where applicable.

IV. Environmental Criteria

- a) The organiser shall:
- i. take reasonable measures to encourage service providers to adhere to a sustainable purchasing practice.
 - ii. implement and report on energy efficiency measures that are taken and shall ensure that the energy consumption of the event is measured and recorded.
 - iii. implement and report on measures that are taken to minimise water consumption at the event and shall ensure that the water consumption at the event is measured and recorded
 - iv. identify greenhouse gas emission reduction opportunities associated with the event and take measures to minimise or avoid such emissions..
 - v. ensure that waste management plan is available, addressing both solid and liquid wastes, and shall ensure measures are in place to collect, reduce, recycle and manage waste associated with the event.
 - vi. ensure that appropriate facilities are made available to manage the disposal of hazardous chemicals, materials and waste.
 - vii. implement measures to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds and other pollutants caused or affected by the event as applicable.
 - viii. ensure that all service providers adhere to any national and international requirements that govern the trade in listed, endangered or threatened (or any combination of these) species and shall alert service providers to these requirements.
 - ix. not permit the display, use or holding of any wildlife without the required permits or appropriate enclosures.
 - x. encourage the use of indigenous plants for décor, landscaping or rehabilitation purposes.
 - xi. ensure that measures are in place to avoid any adverse effects on ecosystems, and shall ensure that any negative environmental impacts resulting from the activities of the event are addressed.
 - xii. ensure that participants are made aware of the environmental, social or economic objectives of the event and encourage participation in reducing the event's overall impact on the environment and natural resources.

Part Two – Interpretation Guide for this Standard

Implementing the Standard is in many instances a simple, organisational process, but the following interpretations of the Standard will assist in this regard. In all instances, these are for illustrative purposes and should not be regarded as the definitive practice.

A sustainable event represents a number of interrelated activities that collectively aim to minimise and avoid impacts on the environment, local communities and which contribute to the socio-economic benefit of their host community. Every step in the process of creating a sustainable event requires control and monitoring, and the event Organiser is the person that sets the tone and monitors the performance of an event in this regard.

In setting the 'tone', the Organiser needs to identify the potential impacts, and then establish the standards that will be applied to minimise, avoid or mitigate the impacts. While the Organiser is not necessarily expert in every aspect of each event, an understanding of the standards relevant to specific disciplines and activities helps establish the ground-rules prior to the contracting and commitment stage.

It requires a commitment to creating and holding a less environmentally/socially impactful event and then ensuring that all role-players play their part to achieve a common vision for the overall event. Importantly, the **Sustainable Event Vision or Policy** must be established and finalised before contracting of service providers, contractors or venues takes place, so that the terms and objectives of the overall event can be met. It is pointless to expect a sustainable event if those contracted or retained are incapable or – or unwilling to implement the sustainable standards needed, so get this aspect sorted-out before committing to any specific contractor, service provider or facility for the best results.

It is also important to note that the 'greenest' event is the one that isn't being held and there are going to be activities or aspects of any specific event that have unavoidable impacts or consequences. The aim is to create the greenest event possible under the circumstances and these standards are designed to assist in that regard.

I. Sustainable Operations and Management

- a) Ensuring that relevant laws, by-laws, regulations and legal requirements must be paramount in the mind of the Organiser. Ensure that the necessary permits and licences have been obtained before your event takes place, because it can be inconvenient – not to mention embarrassing, to have the event stopped by officials for something as simple as an electrical certificate.
- b) Developing a Sustainable Event Policy is a relatively simple process. It is a document that outlines the Organisers commitment to organizing and managing an event that aims to have a reduced impact on the environment and local communities, and which will address amongst other issues, responsible resource use (water and energy); responsible waste management; sustainable and responsible procurement; fair and equitable working conditions and remuneration and a commitment to continual improvement in all areas. A draft is attached as an addendum.

In addition to developing the Policy, the Organiser commits to promoting it and ensuring that all contractors, service providers and even delegates and visitors, strive to meet the objectives and goals that have been set. The document should be made publicly available – whether that is on the event website or as a poster or signage at the actual event is up to the Organiser. The purpose of this is to ensure that visitors are in a position to measure compliance with the commitment and to ensure that everyone involved is aware of and compliant with the Policy.

In support of the Policy, the Organiser must ensure that appropriate management measures are put in place to meet the obligations that have been made. This could include anything from appointing a single member of the team to oversee and monitor compliance to ensuring that there are waste separation facilities on the exhibition floor and that the venue is managing waste and resources responsibly. It is important to understand that a sustainable event is measured and evaluated across all operational areas – some of which are beyond the direct control of the Organiser, but which nevertheless impact on the overall performance of the event itself. For example, an event cannot be recognised as sustainable if the venue simply mixes and dumps waste from the event without any attempt to recycle or reduce waste to landfill.

Having developed your management actions, you need to ensure that the events' 'footprint' is being monitored throughout the period. This requires constant review of actions and activities that pose an environmental risk and review of the procedures and controls that have been set in place. Remember that part of becoming sustainable is recognising your shortcomings and then working to avoid their repetition.

All the management systems in the world cannot replace good staff training and awareness, and sustainable events require the Organiser to ensure that all staff, associates, contractors, service providers and other support organisations are trained and made aware of the Policy and the commitments and objectives of the sustainable event. And this need not take great chunks out of an already tight schedule – just constant reminding and monitoring of the objectives.

- c) One of the most frequent causes for complaint regarding the sustainability of events, is the practice that some Organisers have of declaring their events 'Green' or 'Sustainable' before the event takes place. While you may have every intention of holding a sustainable or 'green' event at the outset, you can really only make the claim during or after the actual event takes place because of the 'unknowns' that arise during any event itself. Until you know what your 'footprint' is – and it can be calculated, and only if you are absolutely sure that everything you have planned and arranged takes place, can any claims be made.

And another shortcoming relates to self-certification – or the tendency to make claims about your own performance. Sustainability is a credibility issue, and it has particular risk to corporate and organisational integrity, so having your event certified by a neutral, third-party is always more advisable. While this doesn't stop you striving to be a sustainable event, be aware of the risks associated with self-certification and unsubstantiated claims and avoid making these claims yourself.

II. Social and Cultural Criteria

The social and cultural aspects of sustainability relate to the way in which your event affects or impacts on the community around your facility or venue. To what extent have you considered the social, cultural, and religious impacts associated with your event, and how have you taken measures to minimise or avoid these? The truth is, that most events take place with the client in mind – their wishes, expectations and above all – budgets, tend to guide the Organiser in most respects, but increasingly, responsible organisations, companies and indeed, government, are beginning to question the impacts that businesses have on local communities.

This standard considers the way in which sustainability becomes a local issue as well as a business driver. In planning an event, the Organiser needs to understand how their activities impact local sites; communities; resources and cultural sensitivities. Where an event takes place in a historical, cultural or spiritually important place, Organisers need to ensure that the site is not damaged or changed in any way by the event or its activities. They also need to ensure that local communities have reasonable and controlled access to their specific sites when events take place over a period of days. Controlled access would include special passes; secure access points and routes and other non-invasive security, but it does not necessitate free and unfettered access to the venue or activities.

The provision of basic services to communities is uppermost in most people's minds, so Organisers of events that take place in rural areas need to ensure that in the event that they need large amounts of water (as an example), that they bring the water with them rather than use limited resources available to the community. The same goes with waste which should be taken out of the area by the Organiser rather than simply added to limited waste facilities in the location. The principle of 'leave only footprints' should be applied in all instances where the community is concerned, so consider what you need to do before the event takes place.

Social and cultural norms in many parts of this country are still very important to local communities, so Organisers must consider whether they would be breaking any while holding events in rural areas. For example, staff and visitors should be made aware of local custom that considers the taking of photo's of people in the community taboo or insulting so as to avoid possible conflict or insult to host communities. Get to understand what is acceptable in local culture before simply barging-in with your group as this often plays a large part in the success of your event.

The needs of specific groups should also be considered when planning an event. Just as the meal choices of guests is respected by Organisers when planning menu's and buffets, so too should the needs of persons with disabilities be respected. Ensure that access to exhibition areas, halls, buffets and toilets is made as easy as possible for persons with mobility needs or that those with visual or aural disabilities and other special needs are catered for with dignity.

Legacy projects are the new 'black' in eventing and they tend to create goodwill at community and client level as well. This can involve something as simple as donations to local charities and organisations or the development of science labs and planting of food gardens, but whatever the legacy that you want to leave, understand the needs of the community before simply doing what you 'think' is needed. The best way of doing this is to get involved with community structures in the location, and understand what they would most appreciate. If your venue is a hotel or convention/exhibition centre in an urban setting, find out what they support and see how you can add-value to their existing initiatives.

III. Economic Criteria

The economic impact of eventing is huge – from contractors and service providers to catering, décor and entertainment, but often this impact is felt far from the actual location of the event itself. This standard aims to ensure more equitable distribution of the economic benefits of events by encouraging local involvement with everything from venue hire to catering, floral arrangements; entertainment and even transport.

If your event is being held in an existing venue, chances are that you are already making use of local community members for service and cleaning services. But if you are holding an event in the open or at a non-established venue, avoid bringing service staff with your team and consider using local community members for this purpose. There are limitations to what can be done at community level, but other than for skilled technical or professional personnel, the use of locals as waiters, cleaners, ushers and other unskilled roles should be considered. By up-skilling and training locals, you are contributing to the economic potential of the community, whereas bringing unskilled staff into an area often creates anger and conflict. And importantly, ensure that all personnel – in whatever capacity, are paid a decent, legal and prescribed wage. Irrespective of whether they are trained or not, wages for temporary staff are prescribed and the minimum must be budgeted and paid.

Another important element in the economic beneficiation process is to make use of smaller, independent enterprises and service providers whenever possible. Again, this will depend on the level of skill or expertise required, but most small venues and towns have entrepreneurs that could easily meet the standard of many events if given the opportunity. This extends to using local hire companies; suppliers; grocers; hardware stores and other non-technical services whenever possible.

The use of child labour is a contentious issue. Some say that using children gives the child experience for later life, but responsible business and existing best practice avoids using children in any capacity for gain of any kind. Using children because it is cheaper than other labour sources is illegal and cannot be condoned by any organisation. There are however exceptions if one considers local children's' choirs and cultural groups that sometimes get used for entertainment. As long as their parents or those responsible for their welfare have given approval – and it is an organised activity, their inclusion in your programme is quite permissible for as long as the fees that are paid are given to the organisation that they represent. Obviously, sexual exploitation of children is unacceptable under any circumstances and any forced labour would be illegal.

Because of the sensitivities that exist around community and donations or legacy issues, it is important that the Organiser ensure transparent and fair distribution of any donations, contributions or legacy initiatives. Calculate the value and nature of the donations that you have any distribute the funds or goods equitably as far as possible, recording the recipients for future need.

IV. Environmental Criteria

Sustainability is multifaceted, but a large part of creating more sustainable events relates to the environmental impacts that they have. Eliminating all impacts is unrealistic because of the nature of events, but controlling and minimising them is quite possible under normal conditions. Again, the Organiser is the key to the environmental performance of an event because the Organiser sets the conditions under which a sustainable event must take place, and is responsible for ensuring that all role-players do their bit to achieve a common objective – that of sustainability.

Their role extends from setting the rules through the Sustainable Event Policy, to guiding and encouraging responsible practices across all aspects of the event itself. From procurement of goods and services, to the use of resources, social and economic beneficiation and reporting, the Organiser needs to control and guide everything. While many of the activities fall outside their direct control – or sphere of influence, they are required by this standard to influence where they can, and to manage and monitor performance across activities over which they have direct control. And while the efforts may seem successful and compliant, they need to monitor, record and report on the performance in general. There is a planning and monitoring function in many respects.