



A Playbook to Plan & Create Sustainable Events.

Imagine an event...

Where zero waste hits landfills,
local product takes center
stage, and every detail reflects
a commitment to the planet!



About this playbook

This is your no-nonsense guide for in-person event organizers. It's designed to help you deliver increasingly ambitious events while staying true to your sustainability goals.

Inside, you'll find a practical overview of all the core components and best practices—ready to help you wow your audience and reduce your environmental impact.



Components of a Sustainable Event:

01 Food & Drink

02 Power & AV Equipment

03 Services & Staffing

04 Logistics & Transport

05 Fabrication & Stage Material

06 Suppliers, Exhibitors & Partners

07 Venues

08 Accommodation

09 Self Assessment



Food & Drink





10%

Of global greenhouse emissions
are caused by food waste.



1/5th

Of food at an event is
typically wasted.

Best Practices

Aim high!
Follow these
4 principles:



Sustainable Catering & Beverages

Go green with your menu! Opt for plant-based dishes, locally sourced produce, and ethically raised meat and dairy to slash your catering carbon footprint.



Sustainable Food & Packaging Choices

Ditch the disposables! Say no to single-use plastics, embrace reusable options, and choose packaging that's easy to recycle (or better yet, compost!).



Food Waste Reduction

Less waste, more impact! Smart menu planning, portion control, and donating surplus food keep perfectly good meals out of the landfill.

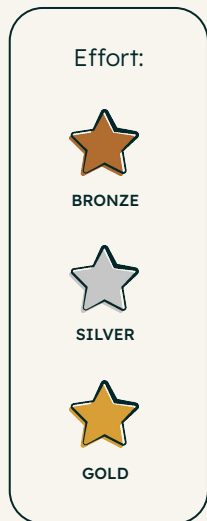


Waste Segregation & Recycling

Make waste work for you! Clever bin placement, clear signage, and live waste tracking ensure recyclables & compostables end up where they belong - not in landfill.



Checklist



01

Sustainable Catering & Beverages

- ☐ Provide water refill stations instead of bottled water
- ☐ Use ethically certified products (Fair Trade, MSC, Rainforest Alliance)
- ☐ Source local, seasonal, and organic ingredients
- ☐ Ensure at least 50% of the menu is plant-based or vegetarian
- ☐ Significantly reduce or remove red meat menu options

02

Food Waste Reduction

- ☐ Educate staff and vendors on food waste best practices
- ☐ Implement portion control to avoid excessive servings
- ☐ Set up composting stations for unavoidable food scraps
- ☐ Track food waste data to improve over time
- ☐ Partner with local charities for food donation programs

03

Sustainable Food & Packaging Choices

- ☐ Ban single-use plastics, including cutlery & straws
- ☐ Avoid individually wrapped condiments or over-packaged items
- ☐ Require recyclable or compostable packaging from vendors
- ☐ Offer reusable glassware and cups for beverages
- ☐ Source certified sustainable packaging suppliers

04

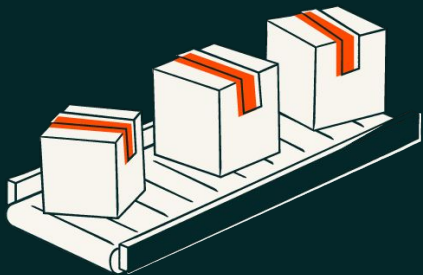
Waste Segregation & Recycling

- ☐ Use clearly labelled bins for composting, recycling, and general waste
- ☐ Provide visual signage showing what belongs in each bin
- ☐ Match bin materials with local waste disposal capabilities
- ☐ Assign volunteers/staff to guide attendees
- ☐ Collect and analyse waste data post-event



Power & AV Equipment





62 million

metric tonnes of e-waste was
generated in 2023



4%

of global carbon emissions come
from tech - more than the entire
airline industry!



Best Practices

Switch on to these 4 principles:



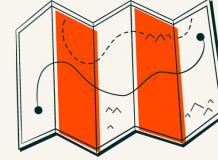
Sound & Light Pollution

Audio-visual setups, especially outdoors, can disrupt local ecosystems with excessive noise and artificial light. High-powered speakers and bright LED walls can affect both wildlife and human well-being.



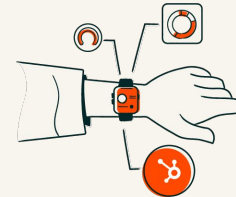
Energy Consumption

The global Audio-Visual equipment industry is anticipated to reach \$389.21 billion by 2030, with a projected growth rate of 6.1% between 2024-2030. Inefficient use and standby power waste further increase energy demands. Transitioning to energy efficient equipment and smarter usage practices can cut carbon emissions.



Packaging, Transportation & Manufacturing

AV equipment is typically shipped and packaged with non-recyclable materials, contributing to emissions and plastic waste. Choose local suppliers and sustainable packaging. Additionally, manufacturing processes consume large amounts of water and energy. This issue requires systemic change in how tech is designed and sourced.

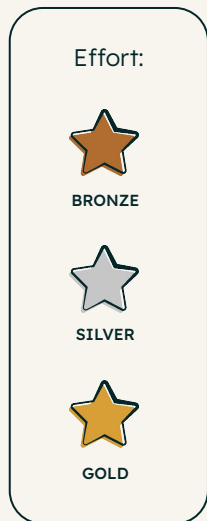


Electronic Waste (E-Waste)

Rapid tech turnover and limited recyclability result in large volumes of e-waste. Many devices contain hazardous substances that can harm the environment if not properly disposed of. Extending product life cycles and supporting recycling programs are key to addressing this issue.



Checklist



01

Energy Consumption

- ☐ Unplug devices when not in use
- ☐ Enable auto power-off and energy-saving modes on AV equipment
- ☐ Replace outdated gear with energy-efficient models
- ☐ Transition to LED displays and low-power alternatives
- ☐ Use energy from renewable sources and avoid any fuel-based power generation

02

Packaging, Transportation & Manufacturing

- ☐ Reuse or repurpose equipment packaging
- ☐ Choose vendors that offer recyclable or minimal packaging
- ☐ Request bulk shipments to reduce packaging waste
- ☐ Source equipment locally to reduce transport emissions
- ☐ Choose AV brands with strong environmental and ethical sourcing policies

03

Electronic Waste (E-Waste)

- ☐ Donate or sell functioning but outdated gear
- ☐ Extend equipment life span through regular maintenance
- ☐ Partner with certified e-waste recyclers
- ☐ Choose modular AV systems that allow for easy upgrades
- ☐ Prefer vendors with take-back or circular economy programs

04

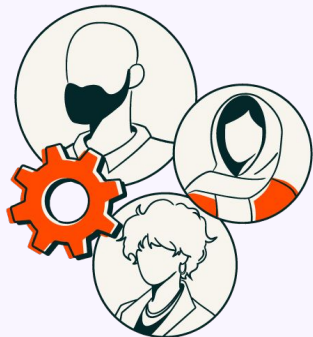
Sound & Light Design

- ☐ Schedule events during appropriate hours
- ☐ Avoid or minimise strobe and high-intensity lighting
- ☐ Utilise natural lighting as much as possible and minimise excess lights during the day
- ☐ Use speaker placement and space acoustic design to improve the efficiency of audio systems
- ☐ For medium-large events, incorporate quiet zones or sensory friendly spaces



Services & Staffing





1.5 tonnes

of event emissions comes from staffing from travel to uniforms to support services — people power has a carbon cost.



Smarter staffing = serious savings

Hiring local, reducing shifts, and using low-impact services can slash energy use and avoid waste — win-win!



Best Practices

Check out these 3 principles:



Sustainable Staffing & Operations

Focus on optimizing workforce size to avoid unnecessary resource use, minimizing travel by sourcing staff locally, and encouraging eco-friendly work practices. Efficient scheduling ensures staff are used effectively, and training them in energy conservation, waste sorting, and other sustainable behaviors enhances overall impact.



Diversity & Inclusion

Champion diversity and inclusion within the workplace and supply chain. Collaborate with suppliers who share our commitment to creating inclusive, fair, and empowering environments, upholding ethical labour practices, ensuring fair pay and safe working conditions, and supporting opportunities for growth and development for all.

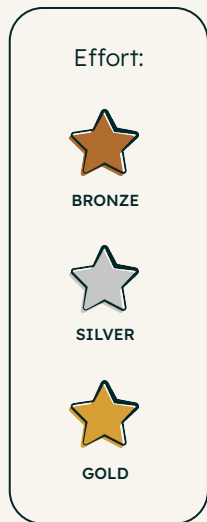


Green Certifications & Training

All team members, from operations to front-line staff, should be educated on sustainability protocols relevant to their roles. Providing this training fosters a culture of accountability and awareness. When staff understand the importance of their actions, they're more likely to engage meaningfully and help reinforce sustainable behaviors among attendees and other stakeholders.



Checklist



01

Sustainable Staffing & Operations

- ☐ Minimize the number of staff needed by streamlining operations
- ☐ Use digital tools to manage schedules and avoid overstaffing
- ☐ Offer virtual/hybrid work opportunities to reduce the need for onsite staff travel
- ☐ Promote the use of local staff to minimize transportation-related emissions
- ☐ Track and reduce energy and water use within staff areas

02

Green Certifications & Training

- ☐ Provide sustainability training for staff
- ☐ Collaborate with green-certified service providers (e.g., ISO 14001, Fair Trade, LEED)
- ☐ Ensure event vendors and partners have demonstrated sustainability practices
- ☐ Incorporate sustainability into staff job descriptions and performance criteria
- ☐ Establish sustainability certifications for events and include them in planning

03

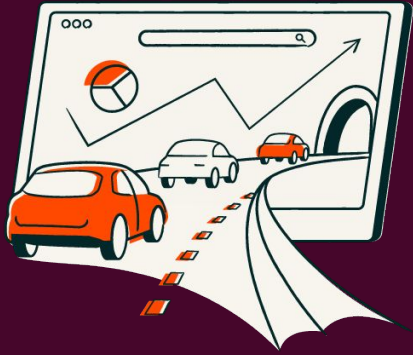
Diversity, Equity & Belonging

- ☐ Promote equal opportunities in staffing and vendor selection
- ☐ Collaborate with diverse suppliers and contractors who share our commitment to sustainability and social impact.
- ☐ Ensure fair labor practices and provide staff with proper training and benefits
- ☐ Support gender equity and inclusivity initiatives
- ☐ Prioritize partnerships with organisations that actively create opportunities for marginalised communities.



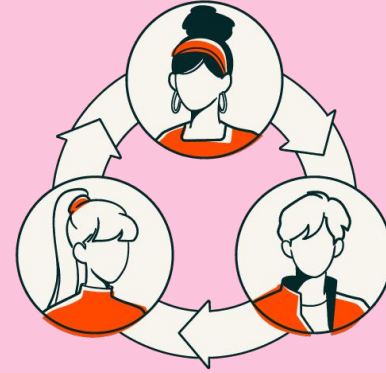
Logistics & Transport





30%

of EU emissions are from transport, with freight and logistics making up a significant share.



80%

of an event's total carbon footprint can come from attendee and staff travel.

Best Practices

Drive and promote these 4 principles:



Transport Planning & Optimization

The global event logistics market is worth over \$68bn and is expected to grow by 6.3% per year, until 2030. With this comes increased emissions. Reduce unnecessary trips, optimize routing, and consolidate deliveries. Use real-time tracking and analysis to improve efficiency. Plan ahead for potential disruptions and have contingency plans in place.



Local Sourcing

Minimize transport distances by sourcing equipment, materials, and services locally. This reduces carbon emissions and supports the local economy. Develop relationships with local suppliers and explore opportunities for collaborative sourcing with other events in the area.



Low-Emission Vehicles & Modes

Shift to electric, hybrid, or low-emission transport, and prioritize rail or sea over air freight. Encourage the use of public transportation or cycling for local deliveries. Explore alternative fuels like biodiesel or hydrogen for long-haul transportation.



Supplier Engagement & Collaboration

Work with logistics partners that have sustainability commitments and certifications. Include sustainability requirements in contracts and encourage partners to set emissions reduction targets. Collaborate on innovative solutions and share best practices.



Checklist



01

Transport Planning & Optimization

- ☐ Schedule deliveries during off-peak hours to reduce congestion
- ☐ Combine deliveries and pickups to reduce the number of trips
- ☐ Use digital tools to optimize route planning and avoid traffic delays
- ☐ Conduct post-event transport audits to improve performance
- ☐ Use renewable-powered logistics providers

02

Low-Emission Vehicles & Modes

- ☐ Encourage crew carpooling or shared transportation
- ☐ Choose couriers or vendors that offer electric or hybrid fleets
- ☐ Use cargo bikes or small EVs for local transport
- ☐ Encourage virtual/hybrid event options to reduce long-distance travel
- ☐ Shift long-haul freight from air to rail or sea when possible

03

Local Sourcing

- ☐ Identify local supplier for equipment needs
- ☐ Prioritize venue-based AV or staging equipment to avoid extra transport
- ☐ Encourage use of local labor to reduce travel-related emissions
- ☐ Consolidate sourcing with nearby events to share resources
- ☐ Build partnerships with regional suppliers to streamline logistics

04

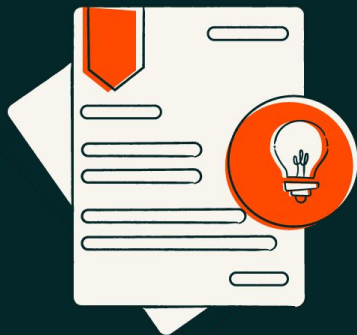
Supplier Engagement & Collaboration

- ☐ Ask logistics partners for sustainability credentials
- ☐ Include environmental criteria in procurement contracts
- ☐ Host sustainability briefings with suppliers before events
- ☐ Collaborate on carbon footprint reduction targets
- ☐ Co-develop innovative low-impact logistics solutions with partners



Fabrication & Stage Materials





5%

Of global CO2 emissions are attributed to concrete. It's a go-to material for stages, booths, and structures — which means your event setup could be carrying more carbon than you think.



Up to 90%

of event build materials are used once and then discarded modular and reusable designs can reduce this dramatically — saving carbon, cost, and storage space.



Best Practices

Build these 4 principles into your strategy:



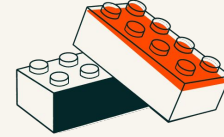
Sustainable Material Sourcing

Responsibly sourcing materials, with a focus on using recycled or renewable options, reduces resource depletion and minimizes negative environmental impacts throughout the event's lifecycle, from planning to deconstruction.



Eco-Friendly Construction

Employ environmentally friendly construction techniques that prioritize resource conservation and energy efficiency. This includes minimizing waste, using sustainable materials, and optimizing construction processes for lower environmental impact.



Modular & Reusable Structures

Modular and reusable structural designs, such as staging and booths, minimize waste by allowing elements to be reconfigured and repurposed for multiple events, reducing the need for new materials and construction each time.

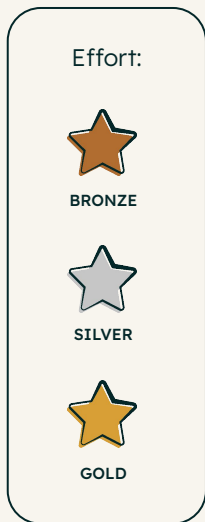


Waste Minimization in Fabrication

Reduce waste during the fabrication and construction process by carefully managing materials, recycling offcuts, and avoiding single-use items. Implementing recycling stations and responsible disposal practices further ensures resource conservation.



Checklist



01

Sustainable Material Sourcing

- ☐ Source materials locally to reduce transportation emissions
- ☐ Select materials that are recyclable or reusable to limit waste
- ☐ Establish clear sustainability criteria in vendor contracts to hold suppliers accountable for environmental performance

02

Modular & Reusable Structures

- ☐ Avoid any single use visuals and signage
- ☐ Design sets for reuse across multiple events
- ☐ Ensure storage and repurposing of materials for future events
- ☐ Work with production companies who hire out sets and materials, and collect them post-event

03

Eco-Friendly Construction

- ☐ Work with production companies using sustainable construction methods and non-toxic materials
- ☐ Minimize waste during construction
- ☐ Ensure low energy consumption during the fabrication process

04

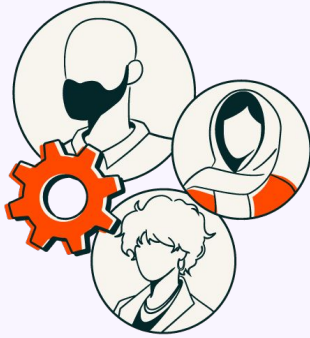
Waste Minimization in Fabrication

- ☐ Recycle and repurpose construction materials
- ☐ Set up waste diversion stations for the event
- ☐ Repurpose or donate surplus materials after the event



Suppliers, Exhibitors & Partners





70%

of materials used in trade show exhibits are discarded after the event, with a majority ending up in landfills as non-recyclable or single-use waste.



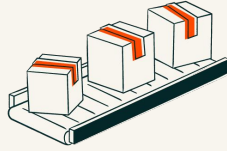
40%

of an event's total carbon emissions can come from logistics for moving materials from suppliers and exhibitors.



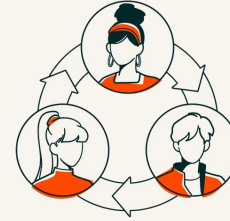
Best Practices

Connect with these 4 principles:



Sustainable Supplier Selection

Select suppliers who prioritize eco-friendly practices, minimizing the environmental footprint of an event. Evaluate their sourcing, manufacturing, and waste management policies.



Green Certifications & Vendor Collaboration

Work with certified vendors who adhere to recognized environmental standards (e.g., ISO 14001, Fair Trade). Collaborate to set sustainability goals and track performance.



Eco-Friendly Exhibition Materials

Encourage exhibitors to use sustainable materials for booths, signage, and promotional items. Offer guidance and resources on eco-friendly options and waste reduction strategies.

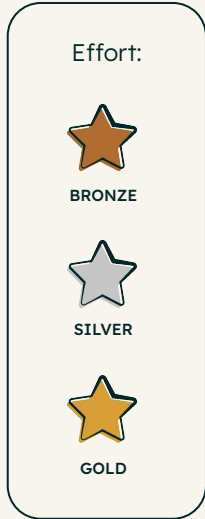


Sustainable Partner Engagement

Engage partners committed to diversity, inclusion, and fair labor practices. Ensure that these values are reflected in their operations and throughout their supply chain.



Checklist



01

Sustainable Supplier Selection

- Choose suppliers with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability
- Source products from companies that use recycled or eco-friendly materials
- Prioritize local suppliers to minimize transportation emissions
- Establish clear sustainability criteria in vendor contracts

02

Green Certifications & Vendor Collaboration

- Work with suppliers and exhibitors who hold sustainability certifications (e.g., ISO 14001, Fair Trade)
- Encourage partners to adopt sustainability measures to reduce emissions, energy use, and waste
- Integrate sustainability into vendor selection and partnership processes

03

Eco-Friendly Exhibition Materials

- Ensure partners and exhibitors reduce hand-outs, and avoid single use and disposable goodies
- Encourage the use of recycled, recyclable, or biodegradable materials for displays and signage
- Consider using digital and/or modular, reusable stands
- Organize post-event donation or repurposing programs for unused materials

04

Sustainable Partner Engagement

- Ensure that all suppliers and partners support fair labor practices
- Encourage suppliers to be transparent about their environmental and social impact
- Promote partnerships with diverse vendors who advocate for marginalized communities



Venues





GREEN CREDENTIALS

Green-certified venues can lead to reduced energy and water consumption, cost savings, and improved attendee satisfaction by aligning with sustainability goals.



30%

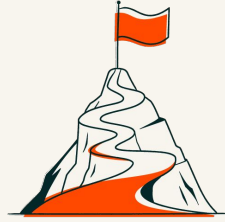
REDUCTION

Choosing a venue with solar power, LED lighting, and efficient HVAC can cut operational emissions by up to 30%.



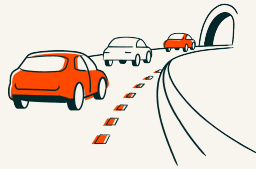
Best Practices

Drive and promote these 4 principles:



Sustainable & Certified Venue Selection

Choose venues that are designed and operated with sustainability in mind, and prioritize those with recognized green certifications such as LEED or BREEAM. Consider the venue's commitment to energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction.



Sustainable Transportation & Access

Promote venues with access to public transit, cycling infrastructure, and other low-emission transport options to reduce travel-related emissions. Encourage attendees to use sustainable transportation by providing incentives or information about available options.



Energy, Water & Waste Efficiency

Implement energy-efficient systems, such as LED lighting and smart HVAC controls. Install water-saving measures like low-flow fixtures and rainwater harvesting. Implement comprehensive recycling and composting programs to divert waste from landfills and promote a circular economy.



Checklist



01

Sustainable & Certified Venue Selection

- ☐ Choose venues who source electricity from renewable tariffs or renewable energy certificates
- ☐ Choose venues with sustainability certifications (e.g., LEED, ISO 14001)
- ☐ Select venues with sustainable infrastructure (e.g., solar power, energy-efficient lighting)
- ☐ Collaborate with venues committed to sustainability
- ☐ Integrate the venue's sustainability practices into your event's goals

02

Energy, Water & Waste Efficiency

- ☐ Ensure the venue uses energy-efficient systems for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC)
- ☐ Promote water-saving initiatives like low-flow faucets and toilets
- ☐ Track energy and water consumption to measure environmental impact
- ☐ Ensure the venue has waste diversion stations and promotes recycling and composting
- ☐ Develop a plan with the venue for recycling or donating materials after the event

03

Sustainable Transportation & Access

- ☐ Prioritize venues near public transportation hubs
- ☐ Ensure venues are accessible to all
- ☐ Choose venues accessible by public transportation
- ☐ Provide bike racks and incentives for low-carbon transportation methods e.g.
- ☐ Bike hire schemes, discounts on public transport, combined tickets for event and transport, etc.
- ☐ Offer shuttle services to reduce carbon emissions



Accommodation





100 – 400

GALLONS

That's how much an average hotel uses —
just for one guest.

💡 A five-night stay could use more water than
the average person drinks in a year.



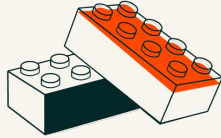
Up to 60%

of an event's total accommodation emissions
come from hotel energy use – mostly from
lighting, heating, and laundry. Choosing energy
efficient and renewable powered hotels can
reduce this dramatically.



Best Practices

Build these 4 principles into your strategy:



Accommodation Selection

Choose accommodations that align with sustainability criteria, reducing resource consumption and emissions. Assess their energy use, water conservation efforts, and waste management policies. Prioritize eco-certifications and sustainable building practices.



Waste Minimization & Recycling

Choose accommodations with comprehensive recycling and waste diversion programs to minimize waste sent to landfills. Encourage composting and food waste reduction initiatives. Partner with them to track and improve waste management performance.



Eco-Friendly Amenities & Services

Use eco-friendly amenities such as refillable toiletries, linen reuse programs, and sustainable cleaning practices. Encourage the use of non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning products, and source amenities locally where possible.



Sustainable Transport options

Promote accommodations that offer easy access to public transportation or encourage sustainable travel options for guests. Provide information about nearby public transport, bike rentals, or car-sharing services. Consider offering shuttle services to and from event venues using low-emission vehicles.



Checklist



01

Accommodation Selection

- ☐ Choose accommodations that have sustainability certifications (e.g., Green Key, EarthCheck)
- ☐ Prioritize hotels that use renewable energy
- ☐ Select accommodations that use locally sourced food
- ☐ Collaborate with accommodations to offer water-saving measures such as low-flow faucets, toilets, and irrigation systems

02

Waste Minimization & Recycling

- ☐ Work with accommodations that minimize single-use items and packaging
- ☐ Ensure accommodations have waste diversion programs (e.g., recycling, composting) in place
- ☐ Set up designated areas for guest recycling and waste separation
- ☐ Partner with accommodations that donate surplus items after the event

03

Eco-Friendly Amenities & Services

- ☐ Promote the use of refillable toiletries instead of single-use
- ☐ Encourage accommodations to implement linen and towel reuse programs to reduce laundry waste
- ☐ Ensure accommodations use non-toxic and environmentally friendly cleaning products
- ☐ Offer guests eco-friendly toiletries

04

Sustainable Transport options

- ☐ Provide information on sustainable travel options to guests, such as public transport routes and bike-sharing programs
- ☐ Choose locations that make it easy to access by public transport
- ☐ Promote options such as biking or walking to nearby event venues
- ☐ Offer shuttle services using electric or low-emission vehicles for event-related travel



Self Assessment

Assess your event's sustainability in 5 minutes. For each section, count up your checklist ticks to determine your Bronze, Silver, or Gold level.

Overall event score

Not all categories will apply to every event. For the categories that do apply, award yourself the badge that reflects the most commonly achieved level across those areas.

[Access your achievement badges here](#)

Section	Your score	Bronze Level	Silver Level	Gold Level
Food & Drink	-/20	1-6	7-12	13-20
Power & AV Equipment	-/20	1-6	7-12	13-20
Services & Staffing	-/15	1-5	6-10	11-15
Logistics & Transport	-/20	1-6	7-12	13-20
Fabrication & Stage Materials	-/13	1-4	5-9	10-13
Suppliers, Exhibitors & Partners	-/14	1-5	6-9	10-14
Venues	-/15	1-5	6-10	11-15
Accommodation	-/16	1-5	6-11	12-16



Self Badges

Download your achievement award based on your self assessment score on the previous slide.

Use it as a badge of honour in your event decks, signage, or internal comms!



Sustainable Event

BRONZE AWARD

We're building the foundations of a greener event future.

[Download bronze](#)



Sustainable Event

SILVER AWARD

We're driving real impact and levelling up.

[Download silver](#)



Sustainable Event

GOLD AWARD

We're walking the walk and inspiring other to do the same.

[Download gold](#)



Questions & Feedback.

We hope you have found this guide useful. 🎉
If you have any questions or feedback, please reach out to our Sustainability team.

Environmental Sustainability at HubSpot

[Reach out by email](#)



Thank You

HubSpot

