GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Sustainable Events Guide

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Introduction

Through Griffith University's Strategic Plan 2020-2025, Griffith University has committed to being a values-based university with sustainable practices at its core.

In 2017, Griffith signed up to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Universities' Commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in 2022, committed to continuous improvement in sustainability by embedding the SDGs in teaching, research and operations.

This Guide assists staff to deliver sustainable events by providing practical information and considerations for planning and coordinating sustainable events.

What is a sustainable event?

Sustainable events are those which consider environmental, social, and economic impacts during all stages of planning and implementation. Sustainable events aim to minimise:

- waste (e.g., food packaging, food waste, plastics)

- energy consumption (e.g., travel emissions, venue lighting costs)

- water use

- disruption to habitat and communities.

Sustainable events also aim to enhance positive impacts by promoting:

- social and corporate responsibility

- supporting local suppliers and communities

- demonstrating our commitment to sustainability.

Planning a Sustainable Event

Venue selection

Digital

Video conferencing offers several sustainability benefits, including reduced emissions from travel and energy used to power physical venues.

- Is in-person attendance required?
- Is sufficient video conferencing equipment available?
    - See Griffith's Video conferencing options

On-campus

Where practical, choose venues with sustainable infrastructure & practices (e.g., Griffith's EcoCentre or the Sir Samuel Griffith 6-star Green Star rated building).

- Consider participant travel requirements and choose a venue with low emissions travel options (such as public and active transport networks).
    - See Griffith's Sustainable Transport options

Off-campus

Choose a venue with low emissions travel options.

- Is the venue accessible by public transport?
- Does the venue have bicycle racks or EV charging facilities?
- Is the venue within walking distance of accommodation or other key facilities?

Choose a venue with sustainable infrastructure, policies and practices?

- Waste and resource recovery
    - Are recycling facilities available?
    - Is waste minimised (e.g., reusable cutlery, plates, bowls and cups)?
    - Is paper printing minimal (e.g., information pamphlets & decorative items)?
- Energy
    - Does the venue use renewable energy (e.g., solar power, wind power)?
    - Does the venue have energy efficient equipment (e.g., LED lighting, energy efficient IT & heating and cooling)?
- Water
    - Are drinking water taps available for attendees to refill water bottles?
    - Does the venue use water efficient appliances (e.g., taps & toilets)?
    - Does the venue use rainwater (e.g., for garden irrigation)?

Event Travel

Land-based

Provide information on low emissions transport options.

- What are the public transport options to the venue and key services attendees will access?

- Can shuttle services be made available where public transport is not available?

- What ride sharing options are available?

- What bicycle, e-scooters or EV charging facilities are available and where?

    o Are bicycles or EV's available for hire?

- What walking routes are available?

Air travel

Air Travel is a major contributor to global emissions. Where air travel to events is unavoidable, participants should consider:

- The number of delegates required at the event

- What flight options have the lowest emissions – websites like Google Flights provides the carbon emissions of each flight to a destination

- Where other activities and meetings can be combined with this travel to maximise the efficiency of the travel and avoid the need for further air travel to the same destination in the future.

Accommodation

When choosing accommodation, consider low emissions travel options between the accommodation and the venue:

- Is it within walking distance of the venue?

- Is it within walking distance of key facilities (e.g. restaurants or supermarkets)?

- Is it accessible by public transport (e.g. for attendees travelling to and from an airport)?

Where practical, provide guest accommodation options that utilise sustainable infrastructure, practices & policies.

- Accommodation that has a commitment to sustainability can demonstrate:

- o   Waste and resource recovery practices

- o   Low or renewable energy use

- o   Responsible water consumption practices.

Reducing Event Materials
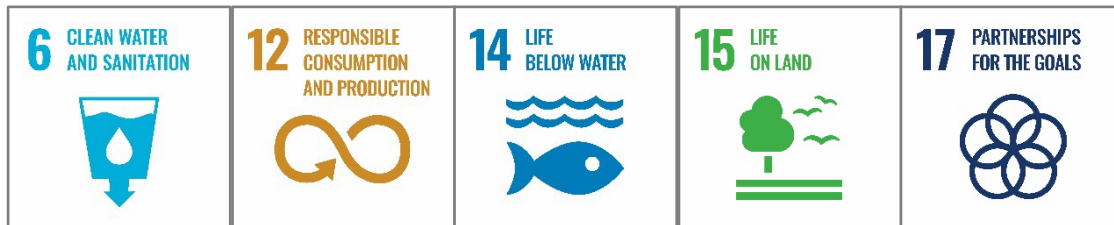
Physical conference or event materials can create high single use waste volumes that often end in landfill. When considering what conference material is provided, the hierarchy of avoid, reduce, digitise, reuse and recycle should be applied.

Event Information

Where possible, use digital conference materials:

- On-line registration

- Provide digital business cards

- Provide agenda, information and promotional material online:

  - o   Make use of QR codes and short URLs to direct attendees to relevant information

  - o   Promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the event to exhibitors and how the event supports implementation of these Goals

  - o   Promote your sustainability measures to those attending your event.

The Sustainability Office has a reusable SDG Promotional Wall available for loan to events, which may be a useful event aid in promoting sustainability.

Delegate & attendee gifts

Event gifts are a significant generator of waste. If gifts are required for an event, you may wish to:

- Avoid:

  - o   Single use or plastic items (e.g., pens, stress balls, bags, plastic bottles, etc)

  - o   Clothing – production and limited use of clothing is a key environmental issue

  - o   Non-locally sourced products – these can often have high carbon costs with production and transport, and social justice considerations in their production.

- Consider instead:

  - o   Electronic gifts, vouchers, or experiences

  - o   A donation on attendee's behalf to a local charity

  - o   Environmental or sustainability focussed gifts (e.g., tree plantings)

  - o   Locally sourced and ethical products (e.g., Indigenous bush tucker packs)

  - o   Gift certificates.

It is recommended to purchase locally made (low carbon emissions from transport), ethical and sustainable gifts:
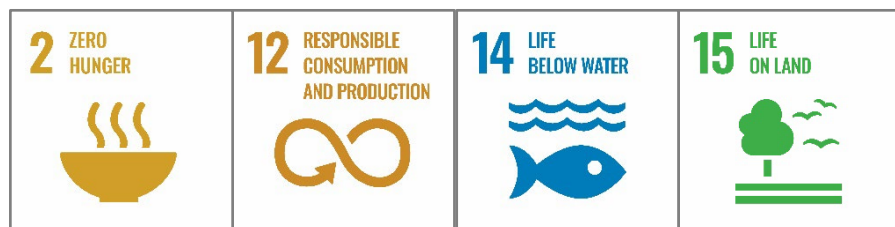
- Use products with an environmental, social or ethical commitment:

  - Certified (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), fair trade or carbon neutral)

  - Supplied by social enterprises that have awareness and commitment to ethical and environmentally sustainable practices.

Exhibitors & exhibits

Work with exhibitors who use environmentally friendly materials or practices. You should:

- Choose digital exhibits where possible

- Use environmentally friendly products (made from biodegradable or recycled materials) where practical

- Reuse or hire reusable display equipment to avoid single use physical exhibits.

Sustainable catering

Consideration should be given to local catering providers that use sustainably sourced and local products to ensure the environmental and social impacts through the supply chain are minimised.

- Where possible, use products with an environmental, social or ethical commitment (e.g., certified products such as Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Marine Stewardship Council certified seafood, fair trade or carbon neutral).

Reducing waste

Waste avoidance and reduction is a key consideration for sustainable events. Griffith University follows the Queensland Government's waste minimisation hierarchy.

Catering

- Ensure catering numbers are accurate to avoid food waste

- Eliminate plastic packaging

  - Use biodegradable or paper packaging

  - Avoid products with excessive packaging (e.g., swap single-serve items with loose or bulk items)

  - Work with the caterer to ensure reuse of packaging during and/or after the event.

Cutlery, glassware, water bottles & cups

Where possible prioritise the reuse of products before purchasing anything new.

- Choose venues that supply cutlery, plates & glassware glasses (e.g., onsite dishwashing & sterilizing)

- Encourage participants to bring their own water bottles & keep cups:

  o Promote water bottle refill stations (ensure venue has these)

  o Promote outlets where discounted beverages are provided for using keep cups

  o Providing branded keep cups and water bottles may be an option, however this should be limited in scope to not create extra waste, as such items are often treated as single use by attendees.

Waste minimisation hierarchy

Most preferable

Avoid and reduce waste

Reuse waste

Recycle or compost waste

Recover fuel from waste
Recover energy from waste

Dispose of waste

Least preferable

Where reuse is not possible (e.g., the venue cannot supply crockery and glassware) only purchase cutlery, cups, plates, and bottles that are:

- made from biodegradable or recycled material (e.g., glass)

- are biodegradable or recyclable

- use incentives to avoid attendees purchasing single use items (e.g., extra charge for takeaway cups or bottles).

Waste & recycling bins

You should choose a venue with waste and recycling strategies already in place that:

- Ensure waste and recycling bins are signed and placed in prominent locations

- Ensure bins are placed together wherever possible, and have options for general waste, food waste and recycling

- Ensure bins are regularly emptied and not overflowing throughout the event

- Promote minimising waste at the beginning of the event

- Signal bin locations to attendees.

Reducing energy use

To assist in minimising the carbon footprint of your event, you should:

- Choose an energy efficient venue (see *Venue selection* section of this Guide)

- Ensure lights, equipment, IT systems and appliances are switched off when not in use

- Ensure the temperature control is set correctly (recommended as):

  o 24 – 26ºC for cooling in summer

  o 18 – 20ºC for heating in winter.