



Climate Action  
**Accelerator**

TOOLKIT

# EVENTS



January 2026



## About the Climate Action Accelerator

The Climate Action Accelerator is a Geneva-based not-for-profit initiative created in 2020 with the aim of leveraging a critical mass of high human impact organisations in order to scale up climate solutions, contribute to greater resilience, and ultimately limit global warming to well below 2°C in order to avoid adverse impacts on communities around the world. Its overall goal is to help shift the aid, health and higher education sectors towards a radical transformation of their practices, halving greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 on a 'net zero' trajectory in line with the Paris Agreement, and transitioning to low-carbon, resilient, sustainable models.

## Acknowledgements

This toolkit was produced by Margot van Eijkern (Programme Officer, Climate Action Accelerator), Sonja Schmid (Head, Climate Solutions & Analytics, Climate Action Accelerator), and Alexia Loiseau (Intern, Climate Action Accelerator)

The toolkit also builds on implementation projects from the climate and environmental roadmaps of Climate Action Accelerator partners. We are grateful for their commitment and for the wealth of knowledge and experience developed through their collaboration.

It was edited by Macarena Castro (Communications Officer).

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## About

This toolkit is a living document that will be continuously updated and expanded as work progresses, incorporating user feedback and good practices from various organisations.

If you have any feedback, please get in touch with us at:

[contact@climateactionaccelerator.org](mailto:contact@climateactionaccelerator.org).

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# OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT COMPONENTS

## PART 1: Preparation and implementation

### Step 1 | Evaluate the need for an in-person event

- Guiding questions

### Step 2 | Select the least impactful destination

- ICAO Green meetings calculator
- Destination certifications

### Step 3 | Incite participants to choose low-carbon mobility

- Travel decision tree
- Train apps

### Step 4 | Key tool : Sustainable event checklist

- Checklist by default

### Step 5 | Measure, monitor and adapt

- Carbon footprint toolkit
- Participant survey
- List of indicators



# OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT COMPONENTS

## [PART 2: Additional resources](#)

- Toolkits
- Calculating the impact of an event
- Training staff
- Seasonal food calendar

### Annex

- **Annex 1:** Travel decision tree
- **Annex 2:** Step-by-step implementation guide
- **Annex 3:** Sustainable event checklist
- **Annex 4:** Travel survey for participants



# INTRODUCTION

## Why a sustainable event?

According to estimations, the average greenhouse gas emissions of a conference visitor range from 0.5 to 1.5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents for a 3-day<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, every human being worldwide would need to limit their emissions to 2.3 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year by 2030 to limit global heating to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This represents approximately half the average footprint of every human being today<sup>2</sup>.

Events, notably large in-person events come with a significant climate impact. The travel-induced carbon footprint of a single conference can amount to more than 2,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions –approximately equivalent to what 270 UK citizens emit in a whole year. The average participant produces between 500 and 1,500 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>-eq per conference round-trip.

However, by applying three key measures: more centrally located conference venues, the promotion of more land-bound travel and the introduction of online participation for attendees from distant locations, the carbon footprint can in many cases be reduced by 78–97 percent.”<sup>3</sup>

## Purpose of this toolkit

The purpose of this event toolkit is to equip organisations with a set of resources and strategies to integrate sustainable solutions into event design to reduce the carbon and environmental footprint of their event-related activities. It serves as a practical guide, offering a suite of tools and best practices.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Freiburg, 'It is best not to fly to conferences', University of Freiburg Office of Science Communications, Freiburg, 2019, <https://kommunikation.uni-freiburg.de/pm-en/press-releases-2019/it-is-best-not-to-fly-to-conferences> (accessed 13 January 2026).

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 'Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change', 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Sebastian Jäckle, 'The Carbon Footprint of Travelling to International Academic Conferences and Options to Minimise It', in *Academic Flying and the Means of Communication*, Springer, 2022, DOI:10.1007/978-981-16-4911-0\_2, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357503320\\_The\\_Carbon\\_Footprint\\_of\\_Travelling\\_to\\_International\\_Academic\\_Conferences\\_and\\_Options\\_to\\_Minimise\\_It](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357503320_The_Carbon_Footprint_of_Travelling_to_International_Academic_Conferences_and_Options_to_Minimise_It) (accessed 19 January 2026).



# INTRODUCTION

## Target audience and users

The toolkit is designed to support environmental coordinators, HR staff, or responsible persons in implementing changes in the way events are designed and managed in an organisation. It provides hands-on advice and experience on how to reduce the main sources of emission of events.

## Feedback

This toolkit is a living document and will continuously be updated to reflect evolving good practice. Partners and other organisations are invited to share suggestions, challenges, and success stories. Additionally, organisations are welcome to contribute in-house tools for potential inclusion. Please contact us at [contact@climateactionaccelerator.org](mailto:contact@climateactionaccelerator.org) for feedback and contributions.





# I. PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

## STEP 1: EVALUATE THE NEED FOR AN IN-PERSON EVENT

**Aim:** Understand the scope and eventual added value of in-person events, offering online participation and understanding the target group.

### Tools:

- Questions for reflection below.

### Actions:

#### 1. Evaluate the goal of the event and the actual need for it to be in-person

- a. What specific outcomes are you hoping to achieve? (e.g. networking, education, brand awareness, sales)
- b. How important is face-to-face interaction to achieve these goals?
- c. What is the ideal attendee experience that in-person events can provide?
- d. What kind of networking and collaboration opportunities are essential?
- e. Is the budget for an in-person event sustainable?
- f. How did previous in-person events fare in terms of attendance, satisfaction, etc.?
- g. Were there specific strengths or weaknesses identified in prior events in relation to sustainability?

#### 2. Explore Hybrid and Virtual Options

- a. Can a hybrid or virtual event achieve the same objectives, with a reduced cost and logistical burden?
- b. How would a hybrid or virtual format impact attendee engagement and interaction?
- c. What are the pros and cons of each format, in terms of reach, cost, and effectiveness?
- d. What are the potential risks and challenges associated with holding an in-person event (e.g. travel restrictions, health concerns, budget constraints)?



### 3. Define the target audience

- a. Who are the main participants we are targeting?
- b. Where are participants most likely to travel from?
- c. Are panellists based locally and otherwise, can they participate online?

### 4. Consider impact of participant travel

- a. Is this event located close to the main target group?
- b. What will be the main method of transport?
- c. Are there specific geographic considerations that favour an in-person event?
- d. What is the level of comfort and willingness to travel for attendees?

### 5. Factor in the tangible and intangible benefits and costs of attending an in-person event

#### a. Benefits of travelling

- i. Advancing discussions
- ii. Establishing new projects and cooperations
- iii. Exchange/discussion for networking
- iv. Experiencing different cultures
- v. Often lower costs for flight tickets as compared to trains

#### b. Negative impacts of travelling

- i. Greenhouse gas emissions
- ii. Work time "lost" when travelling
- iii. Financial costs and exposure to price volatilities
- iv. Inequality over who can travel (finances, time, care taking responsibilities, etc.)

#### c. Co-Benefits of travelling less or by train

- i. Key leverage on greenhouse gas emission reduction
- ii. Financial savings
- iii. Time savings
- iv. Health benefits
- v. Better possibility to work on the train vs in a plane

### Outputs:

- A document outlining the pros and cons of an in-person event as compared to an online event and a good understanding of the climate and environment implications to be used, for example, for decision-making processes.



## STEP 2: SELECT THE LEAST IMPACTFUL DESTINATION

**Aim:** Carefully selecting the venue destination and location to limit participant unnecessary travel.

### Tools:

- [ICAO calculator](#) to select the most centrally located venue
- Destination Certifications
  - [Global Destination Sustainability \(GDS\) Index](#)
  - [Sustainable Destination Certification](#)

### Actions:

#### 1. Select the least impactful city based on the location of participants

After having identified the main target group, use their main locations to evaluate the best middle point that would have a lesser CO<sub>2</sub>e impact. ICAO calculator to identify the best meeting location in terms of climate impact.

#### 2. Choose a greener city destination

If relevant, use complementary sustainability certifications to guide your decision-making when selecting the geographical location of your event destination.

#### The Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index

The [GDS-Index](#) is a performance improvement programme to assess and accelerate the progress of a destination's regenerative journey. It measures, benchmarks, and enhances the sustainability strategies, action plans, and initiatives of destination management organisations, municipal authorities, and their tourism supply.

#### Sustainable Destination Certification

The [Sustainable Destination Certification](#) recognises destinations that have made substantial progress in aligning with global sustainability standards. These destinations are evaluated by Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) accredited certification bodies and must demonstrate responsible environmental, cultural, social, and economic practices.

### 3. Select the least impactful location within the chosen destination's city

Choose a central event location that's easy to reach by public transport, biking, or walking to help reduce emissions and make travel more sustainable. This helps minimise the event's environmental impact and aligns with sustainable practices.

#### Outputs:

- A clear rationale on the selection of the destination and venue location based on expected participant travels.



## STEP 3: INCITE PARTICIPANTS TO CHOOSE LOW-CARBON MOBILITY

**Aim:** Understand the scope and eventual added value of in person events, offering online participation and understanding the target group.

### Tools:

- [Travel decision tree](#)
- Train apps (see below)
- [Climate Action Accelerator Travel Toolkit](#)

### Actions:

#### 1. Provide a travel decision tree to participants to facilitate decision making (see Annex – Travel decision tree)

A travel decision tree serves as a visual representation of the process to decide whether a trip is necessary, if physical attendance is required and if a more sustainable transport mode than the plane can be used. The travel decision tree can be used and adapted by organisations as an awareness-raising tool for staff.

#### 2. Promote the use of trains instead of planes

The alternative of taking a train instead of a flight is often only suitable for European destinations. The map (below) shows the travel times and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of flights and train journeys in Europe, starting in Geneva.

[Chronotrains](#) generates a train route between any European city, integrating multiple booking platforms.

[Open Night Trains Database](#), is a project to collect and automatically enrich additional information about the functioning night trains in Europe – also displayed in the Night Train Maps from [Back on Track](#) and [Good morning europe](#).

[Greenpeace](#) provides a map of the top shorter than 6 hours routes where train travel is a better alternative to short haul flights in Europe .

[Rome2Rio](#) allows for a comparison between different travel options: plane, train, coach, car, ferry, bike hire, driving routes and walking routes, all in one search.



### 3. Raise awareness before the event

- a. To raise awareness about low-carbon mobility before an event, use pre-event communications—like emails or your event website—to inform participants about sustainable travel options such as public transport, carpooling, cycling, and walking.
- b. Provide clear step-by-step instructions, links to local transit routes, and platforms for carpooling. Offer incentives like ticket discounts or prize draws for those who choose eco-friendly transport.
- c. Highlight the benefits, including reduced emissions, less traffic congestion, and support for the local economy.
- d. Collaborate with local transport authorities and sustainable mobility providers to amplify your message and make green travel more accessible.
- e. Consider [training staff](#) on how to build an eco-event.

#### Outputs:

- Increased participant awareness and incentives for participants to choose low-carbon transport.





## STEP 4: KEY TOOL: SUSTAINABLE EVENT CHECKLIST

**Aim:** Understand the scope and eventual added value of in person events, offering online participation and understanding the target group.

### Tools:

- [Template checklist](#)

### Actions:

**1. Identify actions to minimise climate and environmental impacts using the Sustainable Event Checklist**

Use and potentially adapt the provided checklist to your specific set-up.

**2. Engage with relevant internal departments**

Involve and align with HR and other relevant internal stakeholders.

**3. Use the checklist in the design phase of the event**

### Outputs:

- A document/checklist outlining existing initiatives per solution area.



## STEP 5: MEASURE, MONITOR AND ADAPT

**Aim:** Collect the key data to monitor the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of your events and visualise them through a set of indicators.

### Tools:

- The Accelerator's [Carbon Footprint Measurement Toolkit](#)
- [Travel survey for event participants](#)
- Indicators for an event monitoring system (below)

### Actions:

#### 1. Understand the carbon footprint of your event

The carbon footprint of an event refers to the total quantity of greenhouse gases emitted directly or indirectly throughout the event. These emissions are the result of various activities linked to the event, such as:

- Transport
  - Travel by participants, speakers, organisers and suppliers
  - Travel by plane, car, train or any other means of transport
- Food
  - Type of food
  - Sourced locally, organically, sustainable
  - Food waste
- Energy consumption
  - Electricity
  - Heating
  - Air conditioning
  - Other energy sources needed to power the venue
- Suppliers and logistics
  - Goods and services
  - Transport of equipment, food and material.
- Waste management
  - Waste produced and its treatment
- Accommodation
  - Accommodation options chosen
- Temporary facilities and structures
  - Construction and deconstruction
- Paper and printing
  - Communication material



## 2.Data collection

- Identify the sources of emissions that contribute most to your carbon footprint.
- For this, quantify the CO2 emissions associated with each activity. Generally, this revolves around<sup>4</sup>:

Direct emissions	Indirect emissions
Stationary Combustion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diesel generator</li> <li>• Natural gas</li> <li>• Chafing fuel</li> </ul> Mobile Combustion Refrigerant Leakage	Imported Electricity Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation of Goods</li> <li>• Transportation of Waste</li> <li>• Employee Commuting</li> <li>• Transportation of Participants</li> <li>• Hotel Stay</li> </ul> Products and Services Used in the Event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of Food and Water Supply</li> <li>• Waste and Water Disposal</li> <li>• Services</li> <li>• Well to Tank of Fuels</li> </ul>

- To gather travel emissions from participant travel, distribute a [Travel Survey](#) before or during the event to collect information on participants means of travelling.
- Calculate the total carbon footprint by using the Accelerator’s [Carbon Footprint Measurement Toolkit](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Global Sustainable Tourism Council, GSTC2023 Carbon Footprint Report, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, Antalya, 2023, <https://www.gstc.org/wp-content/uploads/GSTC2023-Carbon-Footprint-Report.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2026).



### 3. Take action, monitor key indicators and track progress for effective evaluation

- a. Analyse the results obtained and understand the specific environmental impacts of your event
- b. Interpret the results
- c. Collect and follow a set of indicators to ensure progress is tracked and evaluated

#### i. Core indicators

##### 1. Travel & participation

- a. Total participant travel distance by mode of transport (km)
- b. Average travel distance per participant by mode (km)
- c. Participant origin (local / national / international)
- d. Estimated travel-related CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions

##### 2. Event format

- a. Number of participants (total and per day)
- b. Percentage of participants attending remotely or in hybrid format

##### 3. Energy

- a. Total energy consumed at venues (kWh)
- b. Percentage of low-carbon or renewable energy in total energy consumed

##### 4. Procurement & materials

- a. Estimated CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from purchased goods and services
- b. Percentage of key suppliers with sustainability commitments
- c. Use of reusable or compostable materials in place of single-use items (%)

##### 5. Waste

- a. Total waste generated (kg or estimated)
- b. Single-use plastic generated (kg or estimated)

##### 6. Catering

- a. Percentage of plant-based meals served
- b. Estimated food waste generated (kg or %)

#### ii. Recommended indicators

1. Reuse rate of event materials (signage, badges, lanyards, etc.)  
Percentage of event staff, volunteers and vendors briefed on sustainable event practices
2. Sustainability information shared with participants (yes-no format)
3. Estimated water consumption (m<sup>3</sup>)
4. Availability of drinking water refill stations (number / yes-no)
5. Additional indicators based on actions implemented

### 4. Implement targeted action to reduce climate and environmental impacts for the next events.

### 5. Adjust general strategy and checklist for the event design accordingly.



**Outputs:**

- A data collection sheet (excel) post event to gather event indicators, identify levers of reduction and monitor the evolution of event emissions.





## II. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Related Accelerator toolkits – Available [here](#)

The following tools, guides, and training materials can help take concrete steps toward more sustainable event planning. From calculating an event's carbon footprint to sourcing seasonal food and team training, these curated resources offer practical support for every stage of the process.

- Carbon footprint measurement toolkit
- Travel
- Procurement
- Good office practices

### Sustainable event guides

- WREC Guidance for environmentally sustainable meetings, conferences, trainings, and workshops. Available [here](#).

### Calculating the travel-related impact of an event

- Atmosfair event calculator to measure the impact of an event. Available [here](#).

### Training staff on building sustainable events

- Guidance on how to facilitate 'Greening Events Workshop' – an interactive, scenario-based, in-person workshop for facilitators (including handouts) + these slides + recording of this training focusing on the 4 priority areas related to organising events that have the most negative impact on the environment: Transportation, food, waste, energy consumption.
  - Training for workshop facilitators. Available [here](#).
  - Video. Available [here](#).

### Seasonal fruit and vegetable calendar

- USA – Available [here](#).
- Europe – Available [here](#).
- South Africa – Available [here](#).
- Globally
  - <https://www.zipmec.com/en/harvesting-seasons-for-crops.html>
  - [https://www.tropicalfruitworld.com.au/pages/fruits-in-season-calendar?srsId=AfmBOorKjC6IO\\_dGk\\_VtKaCl87mTCDSyqiuPrJrYfNaUopjUfAZkJPOG](https://www.tropicalfruitworld.com.au/pages/fruits-in-season-calendar?srsId=AfmBOorKjC6IO_dGk_VtKaCl87mTCDSyqiuPrJrYfNaUopjUfAZkJPOG)



# ANNEXES

## Annexes

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Annex 2: Step-by-step implementation guide

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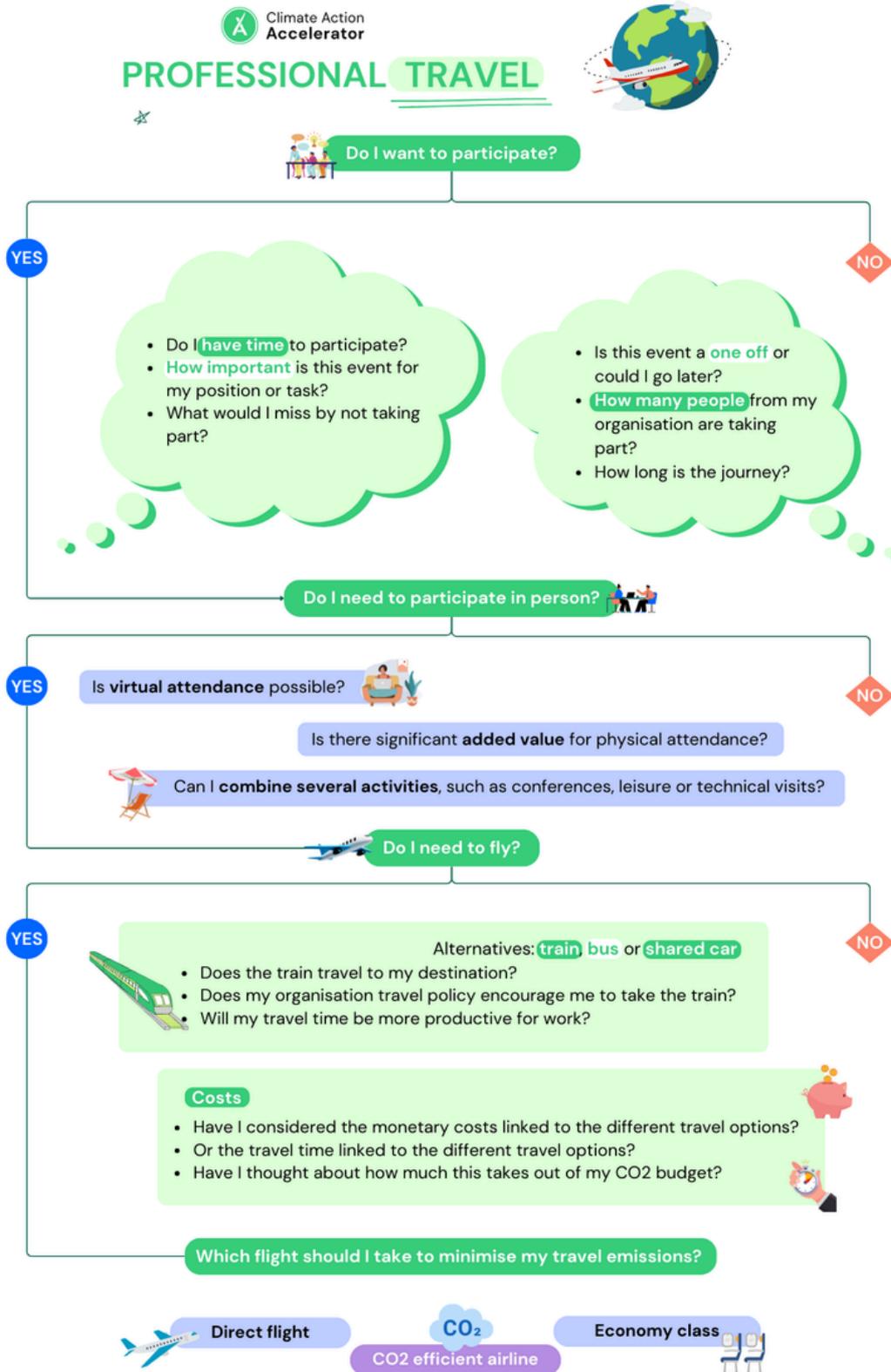
Annex 3: Sustainable event checklist

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Annex 4: Travel survey for participants

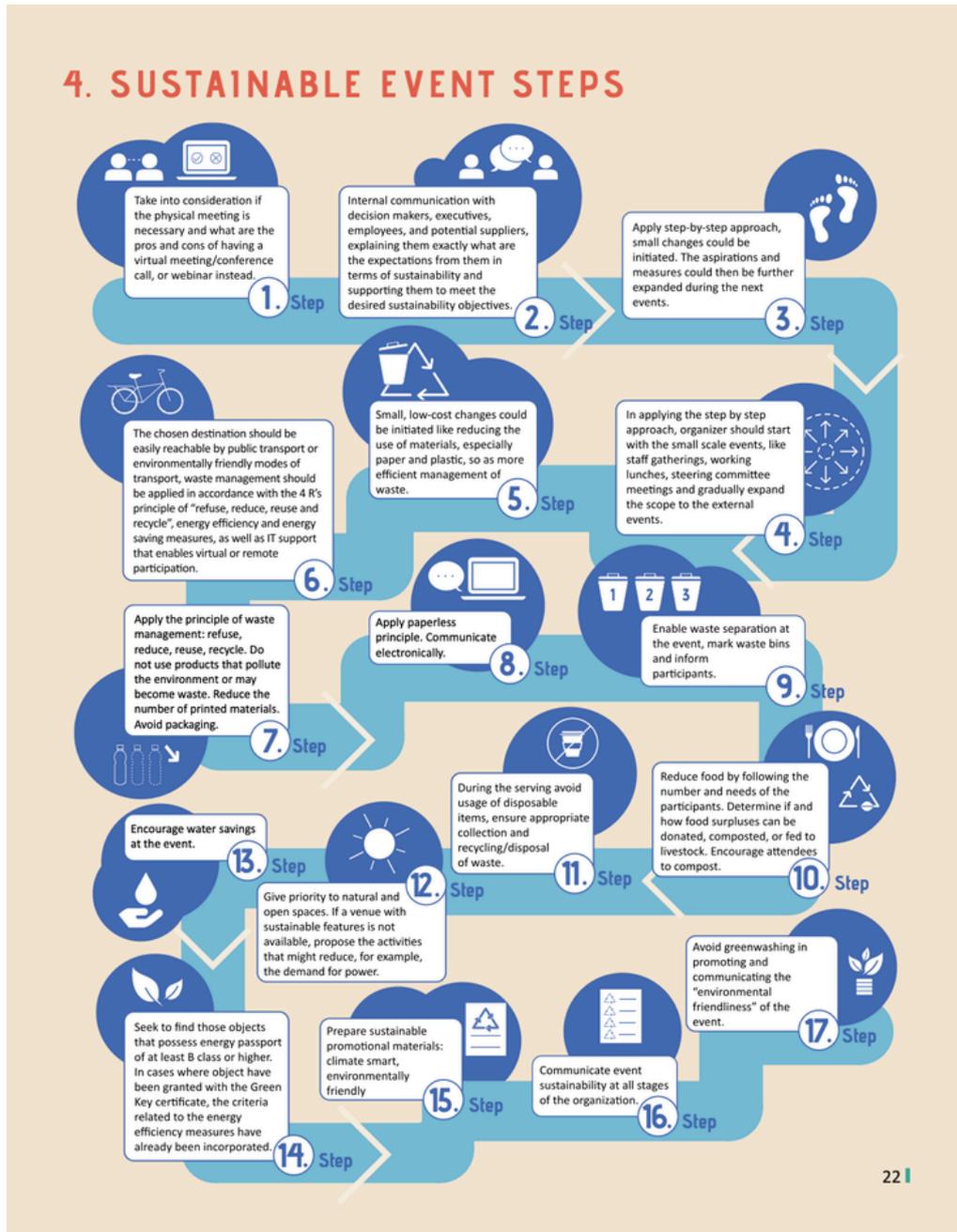
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# ANNEX 1: TRAVEL DECISION TREE



Concept: Susann Görlinger, implementation: CAA  
 Adapted from ETH Zurich's Flight decision tree by Susann Görlinger and Lucia Fabiani (drawings)

# ANNEX 2: STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



Source: United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Guideline for sustainable events: How to plan and organize sustainable events in Serbia (ENG\_Guideline\_Sustainable event). United Nations Development Programme.

[https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/ENG\\_Guideline\\_Sustainable%20event.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/ENG_Guideline_Sustainable%20event.pdf)



# ANNEX 3: SUSTAINABLE EVENT CHECKLIST

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## 1. Transport

Between 70% and 90% of carbon emissions associated with events are linked to the transport of people and goods.<sup>5</sup> Attendees from around the world converge on a specific location, generating substantial carbon emissions from air travel. The environmental impact of these events can be substantial, particularly when considering the scale of attendance and the distances traveled.<sup>6</sup>

The more people have to travel to an event, especially by flying or using cars, the less eco-friendly the event is likely to be. Hence, minimising the impact of transport is essential. The location of your event significantly influences the choice of transport, so careful consideration is key.<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>5</sup> ClimateTrade, 'How to make carbon neutral events: a guide to sustainable event planning', ClimateTrade, n.d., <https://climatetrade.com/how-to-make-carbon-neutral-events-a-guide-to-sustainable-event-planning/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>6</sup> CarbonClick, 'Event travel emissions', CarbonClick, n.d., <https://www.carbonclick.com/news-views/event-travel-emissions> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>7</sup> People in Need, 'Environmental responsibility', People in Need, n.d., <https://www.peopleinneed.net/who-we-are/about-us/environmental-responsibility> (accessed 19 January 2026).

**Transport environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We organise the event entirely online.

Some participants, especially those abroad, can join online instead of travelling to the event.

We have carefully selected the more centrally located conference venue.

We organise the event close to where people live / work to reduce the travel distance.

We ensure that participants' accommodations are near the event's venue.

We provide information on public transport options to and from the venue.

We promote train travel within Europe wherever feasible.

If participants must fly, we advise them to choose the most direct connection and travel using economy class rather than Business to reduce carbon emissions.

We share maps and timetables for buses and trains connecting the airport, railway stations, hotels, and the venue.

We promote the use of local transport cards (if available), and encourage delegates to purchase them before their stay or even offer it for all delegates

We adjust the event schedule to align with public transport availability for ease of access.

We recommend the Citymapper app or Google Maps (or local equivalent) to help attendees navigate using sustainable transport modes.

Optional:



## 2. Venues

The choice of venue for your event reflects your sustainable development policy. It should reflect your organization's environmental and social values, such as energy efficiency, accessibility, and responsible resource use. When possible, apply the criteria outlined in your sustainable procurement policy to ensure the venue aligns with your broader sustainability commitments (see the Accelerator's Procurement toolkit for guidance).

Prioritise venues that hold official sustainability certifications or provide clear, transparent information about the commitments they have made to address sustainability challenges. More and more venues are becoming transparent about their environmental and social responsibility measures. This information is often available on their websites or can be obtained by speaking directly with staff.

### Venue environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We choose a venue accessible by foot, bicycle, or public transport from main participant location.

The venue demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability incl. waste management practices, energy efficiency measures, and water conservation efforts.

The venue/service provider possesses recognised environmental certifications and standards such as:

- ISO 14001 for energy efficiency
- ISO 20121 for sustainable event management
- LEED for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.
- Green building certifications (e.g. from the World Green Building Council).

The venue has high energy performance and is powered by a low carbon energy supply.

The venue operates robust recycling and waste management programmes.



**Venue environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We have considered natural daylight where possible and have adapted the event schedule accordingly.

We rent, borrow – but do not buy- sustainable, local, and fair-trade building materials that can be reused and recycled.

We ban single use disposable plastics and items when possible.

We provide guidance to exhibitors on constructing sustainable stands and displays.

We avoid handing out non-essential promotional items (goodies) to reduce waste.

Optional:



### 3. Accommodation

Hotels, while convenient, are among the most environmentally demanding lodging options due to their energy-intensive operations, high water usage, and significant waste generation. Their reliance on heating and cooling systems, extensive electricity consumption, and water heating, contributes to considerable greenhouse gas emissions—averaging between 0.16 to 0.20 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) per square meter annually.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, carefully selecting more sustainable alternatives operating with lower energy demands, offering shared resources, and emphasising environmentally conscious practices can help minimise to the footprint of an event.<sup>9</sup>

#### Accommodation environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We promote accommodation with recognised sustainability certifications such as Green Globe, Earthcheck, Green Key, or Planet 21.

We promote accommodation that use renewable energy and implement energy, waste and water conservation measures.

We promote accommodation that is well-connected to public transport to minimise travel emissions.

We promote accommodation that offers decent working conditions and fair wages to their staff.

We support accommodation that actively contributes to local community development.

<sup>8</sup> Sustainable Travel International, 'Carbon footprint tourism', Sustainable Travel International, n.d., <https://sustainabletravel.org/issues/carbon-footprint-tourism/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>9</sup> Global Climate Initiatives, 'Comment: calculer l'empreinte carbone d'un événement', Global Climate Initiatives, n.d., <https://globalclimateinitiatives.com/en/comment-calculer-lempreinte-carbone-dun-evenement/> (accessed 19 January 2026).



### Accommodation environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We provide a recommendation list to participants of accommodation responding to these sustainability criteria.

Optional:

## 4. Catering

Food at events is a key lever for promoting local production and reducing the carbon footprint associated with food. Indeed, climate impacts cannot be mitigated without significantly reducing meat consumption and the emissions associated with animal agriculture, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.<sup>10</sup> The hospitality and food service sector lose £3.2 billion every year on food waste.<sup>11</sup> On average, catering events waste between 15% to 20% of the food provided.<sup>12</sup> Bread is one of the most commonly wasted food items at events, with one study revealing that 54% of it was discarded during events attended by 230 participants.<sup>13</sup>

Menus have the ability to shape perspectives. Meals frequently drive discussions, and what is served at events can determine food policies, on an individual, organisational, or, with higher-profile events, even at a national or global level. Promoting plant-based menus (organic, ethically sourced, healthy, and local where possible) while reducing meat consumption can make a significant environmental impact. Meals can also incorporate strategies to reduce waste such as, using damaged food items in soups, sauces, and smoothies, use leftover items on other menus, and changing the timing of food delivery (serving desserts during afternoon breaks when people become hungry again).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Global Warming of 1.5 °C. A Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2018, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>11</sup> WRAP, 'Hospitality and Food Service', WRAP [website], n.d., <https://www.wrap.ngo/taking-action/food-drink/sectors/hospitality-food-service> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>12</sup> The Company of Biologists, 'Minimising your event's food footprint and waste', The Company of Biologists [website], 2021, <https://www.biologists.com/stories/minimising-your-events-food-footprint-and-waste> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>13</sup> Pretorius, J., 'How Can the Event Industry Reduce Food Waste?', Meet Green [website], 2024, <https://meetgreen.com/2024/10/how-can-the-event-industry-reduce-food-waste/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>14</sup> Pretorius, J., 'How Can the Event Industry Reduce Food Waste?', Meet Green [website], 2024, <https://meetgreen.com/2024/10/how-can-the-event-industry-reduce-food-waste/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

**Catering environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We have included catering in our sustainable procurement policy.

We select caterers committed to sustainability, with official certifications or proven environmental/social impact.

We choose menus based on local and seasonal produce – refer to a [seasonal fruit and vegetable calendar](#).

We prefer organic, fair trade, and sustainably sourced products and communicate the origin of products served. / We provide transparent information on the ecological impact of each dish to help participants make informed choices.

We prioritize local drinks over single use bottled beverages where applicable.

We offer vegetarian or plant-based dishes by default.

We opt for a “planetary health diet”, reducing overall consumption of meat and dairy.

We avoid menus with excessive choices – simplify options to reduce waste and streamline preparation.

We adjust portion sizes to avoid excess and focus on quality over quantity.

We ensure caterers implement a food waste reduction strategy and reuse or compost leftovers.

We have discussed with caterers in advance a plan to donate surplus food to charities or third parties.

We allow participants to take away unpacked food in sustainable containers.



**Catering environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We use reusable, compostable, or recyclable serving containers and utensils and provide reusable jugs, and glasses at key locations.

We avoid all single-use plastics in food and beverage services.

Optional:

## 5. Waste management

Events, large and small, generate significant amounts of waste that can negatively impact the planet through pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and resource depletion. If not managed properly, this waste can end up in landfills, contributing to environmental degradation and other problems.<sup>16</sup>

In many countries where humanitarian and development organisations operate, safe waste management and recycling facilities are limited or non-existent. As a result, waste often pollutes the environment and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions—especially when burned or left to decompose, as with plastics that can take centuries to break down. These impacts also harm human health and well-being.

While some waste is unavoidable, much of it can be prevented. Common avoidable items include: Single-use plastic bottles and cutlery; Disposable plates, cups, banners, and decorations; Unnecessary document printing; Automatically provided notebooks, pens, folders, or gifts that go unused; Single-use name tags.<sup>17</sup>

### Waste environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We have developed and implemented a comprehensive waste management plan, including food and construction waste.

We divert waste from landfills and incinerators through donation, reuse, or recycling.

We aim for a zero-waste event wherever possible.

We assess actual needs to avoid overconsumption and unnecessary purchases.

<sup>16</sup> CDDL Recycling, 'The importance of sustainable waste management at events', CDDL Recycling, n.d., <https://cddlrecycling.co.uk/the-importance-of-sustainable-waste-management-at-events/> (accessed 19 January 2026).

<sup>17</sup> Civil Society Now, 'Guidance on facilitating greening events & workshops', Civil Society Now, n.d., <https://civilsocietynow.org/guidance-on-facilitating-greening-events-workshop/> (accessed 19 January 2026).



**Waste environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We apply the 5Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot.

We limit the use of plastic bags for transporting or packaging products.

We avoid individually packaged items (e.g. sugar, milk, cups, bottles) and use reusable dispensers and containers instead.

We provide reusable tableware for staff, guests, and food services.

We ask exhibitors to limit printed and promotional material.

We avoid handing out goodies; instead offer meaningful experiences (e.g. local tours, workshops).

We provide clear and well-marked waste sorting areas for recyclables, compostables, and landfill waste.

We communicate sorting procedures to all participants.

We measure solid waste by type (e.g. food waste, recyclables, landfill).

We set targets to reduce waste.

We recover and donate leftover items or materials to local charities or associations.

We clearly communicate our waste reduction strategy before and during the event.

We remind participants, exhibitors, and staff to bring reusable items (e.g. bottles, pens, bags).

We provide guidance on waste minimisation to all involved.

Optional:



## 6. Communication

Communication plays a key role in informing and raising awareness among your participants. It is essential to maintain authenticity and avoid greenwashing. Effective communication should demonstrate that meaningful impact is possible and that your organisation is taking concrete action. While the message itself is important, equal attention must be given to how it is delivered.

The production of communication materials—whether physical or digital—has environmental consequences, including waste generation, energy consumption, the use of non-renewable resources, and the emission of greenhouse gases and pollutants.<sup>18</sup>

### Communication environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We make our sustainability commitments publicly available before the event.

We communicate our sustainability goals and actions clearly throughout the event.

We avoid greenwashing and only share verified, accurate claims about our sustainability efforts.

We provide accessible formats (e.g. large print, screen-reader friendly, multiple languages) and avoid including event dates or locations on printed materials to allow for reuse in different contexts.

We limit printing and use lightweight, recycled and certified paper (e.g. FSC, PEFC).

We minimise the use of screens, printed materials, and promotional videos.

<sup>18</sup> IKMZ UZH, ESG Communication, University of Zurich, 2025., [https://www.ikmz.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:a1737fb8-b43d-4285-ba73-40e0a2e022f1/esg\\_communication\\_crifc.pdf](https://www.ikmz.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:a1737fb8-b43d-4285-ba73-40e0a2e022f1/esg_communication_crifc.pdf) (accessed 19 January 2026).



**Communication environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

Create and apply a set of environmental criteria to guide the selection of promotional products.

We train staff on inclusive and effective sustainability communication. Encourage and incorporate feedback from staff and stakeholders to improve messaging.

We share sustainable travel and accommodation options with participants ahead of the event and highlight proximity to public transport and low-impact travel methods.

We prioritise experiences and local tours over material giveaways. If giving gifts, choose local, ethical, or eco-designed items.

We share post-event sustainability reports both online and offline on request.

We inform attendees how they can support sustainability efforts or share feedback.

We continuously refine our communication strategy based on feedback and results.

Optional:



## 7. Diversity, equity, inclusion & accessibility (DEIA) and impact

Events can have a lasting impact that goes beyond their economic aspect. To really make a difference, events must have a purpose: they must create value and have a lasting effect on the local community.

The aim is to leave a legacy, ensuring that the event has a significant impact over the longer term for everyone. Whether by supporting local businesses, leaving a positive footprint on the environment, or inspiring lasting change, events have the power to make a difference.

### DEIA and impact environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We partner with local NGOs or associations aligned with our event's theme when relevant.

We organise community-facing activities, such as open days or public workshops, to raise environmental awareness locally.

We involve local stakeholders in planning philanthropic, environmental, or educational initiatives.

We facilitate dialogue between delegates and local experts to share knowledge and exchange ideas.

Throughout the event design, we prioritise service providers who actively support community development and minimise environmental harm.

Optional:



### 8. Governance and monitoring

The management, organisation, and planning of your event will depend on your sustainability policy. It is important to plan the elements of your sustainable strategy well in advance. Regular communication with your teams, suppliers, partners, and delegates is essential to ensure a high level of commitment from everyone involved in your event. Be transparent about your measurement and governance methods.

#### Governance environmental measure

Tick the options you considered

We establish a dedicated sustainability committee or team with clear responsibilities.

We have created a sustainable development strategy, aligned with our organisation's leadership.

We have set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) and align them with event planning.

We conduct an annual review of the plan and a full policy review. We implement correcting measures when needed.

We have defined and tracked KPIs such as energy use, emissions, waste, and water consumption. We track and limit travel carbon emissions for in-person meetings

We calculate the carbon footprint of the whole event, including in-person meetings and other activities before and after the event. We track GHG emissions across Scopes 1, 2, and 3.

We regularly collect and integrate feedback from staff and participants to improve and refine our subsequent events.



**Governance environmental measure**

Tick the options you considered

We will create a sustainability report including an analysis of lessons learnt after the event to handover to the next team.

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Optional:

# ANNEX 4: TRAVEL SURVEY FOR PARTICIPANTS

Collecting travel data from event participants is a key step in understanding the environmental impact of your event. This information can inform future planning, support carbon footprint calculations, and help identify opportunities to promote more sustainable travel choices.

You can easily conduct this survey using digital tools such as Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Typeform, Jotform, or Cognito Forms. These platforms allow you to create and distribute surveys quickly and efficiently, and they simplify the process of collecting and analysing responses.

Below is a suggested survey template you can adapt for your needs. It is recommended to perform the survey during the registration process as it is more likely that participants will complete it than following the event.

## Survey template

### Participant Information

- What is your origin of travel from the event location ?
- What is your role at the event?
  - Attendee
  - Speaker
  - Staff
  - Volunteer
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### Transport Mode Selection

- What is your main mode of transport to attend the event?
  - Plane
    - Was it a direct flight?  Yes  No
    - Class of travel:  Economy  Business  First
  - Train
  - Bus or coach
  - Car (solo)
  - Carpool/shared ride
  - Bicycle
  - Walking \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you using more than one mode of transport (multi-modal travel)?  Yes  No



### Duration and Frequency

- How long will your journey to the event take (one way)?
  - Less than 1 hour
  - 1–3 hours
  - 4–6 hours
  - 7–10 hours
  - Over 10 hours
- Will you also return using the same transport mode(s)?
  - Yes
  - No
- If no, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

### Environmental Awareness

- Were environmental considerations (e.g., CO<sub>2</sub> footprint) a factor in your choice of transport?
  - Yes
  - No
- Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- If alternative lower-emission transport options were provided (e.g., group train tickets or carpooling), would you have used them?
  - Yes
  - No
- Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- What could the organisers do to help participants choose more sustainable transportation options for future events?
- (Open-ended) \_\_\_\_\_



Climate Action  
**Accelerator**

**Contact us**

Chemin des Mines 2

1202, Genève

[contact@climateactionaccelerator.org](mailto:contact@climateactionaccelerator.org)



[climateactionaccelerator.org](https://climateactionaccelerator.org)

