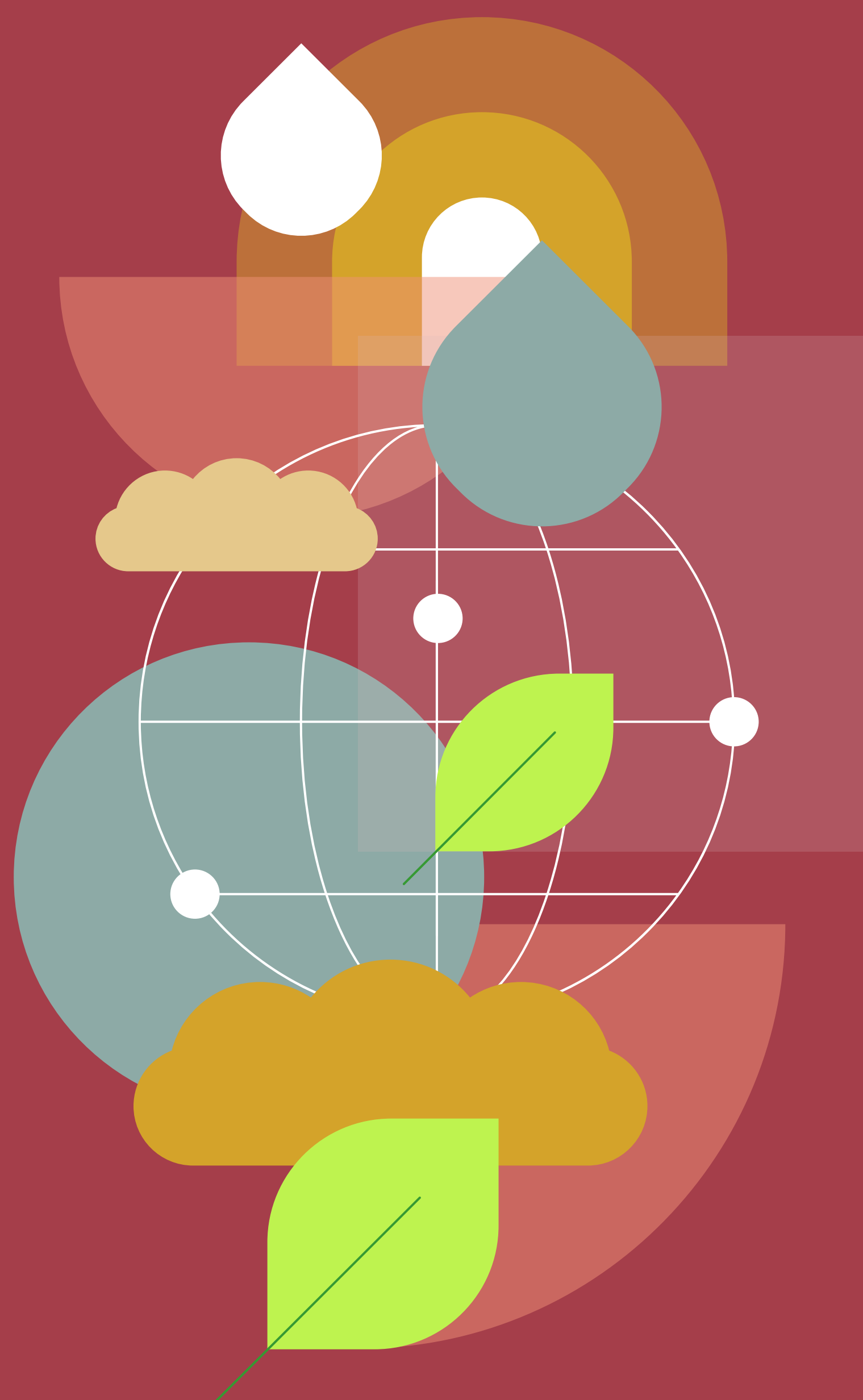
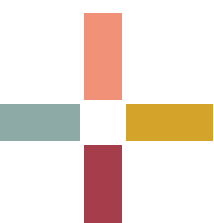




Guide to organising *sustainable events*

2025



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AYUNTAMIENTO DE CORDOBA

Andalucía



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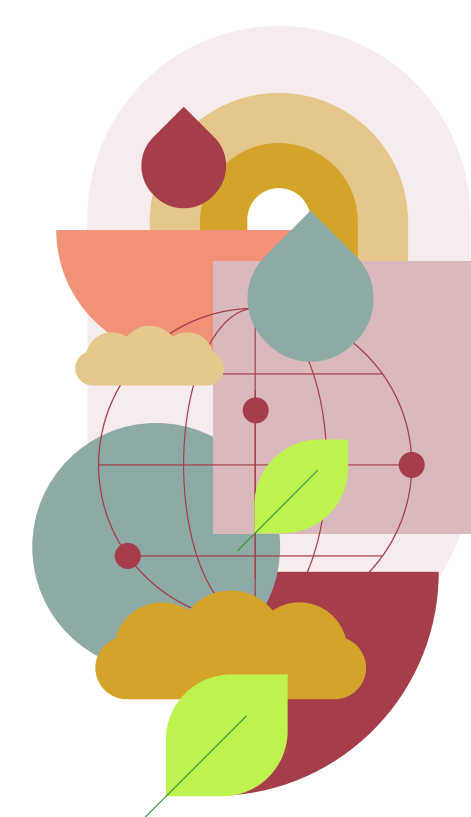
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Guide to organising *sustainable events*

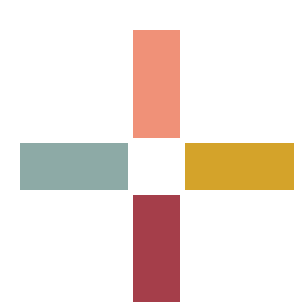
2025

DRAFTED BY

Cordoba City Council
(Tourism Department)

✉ turismo@ayuncordoba.es

🌐 cordoba.es



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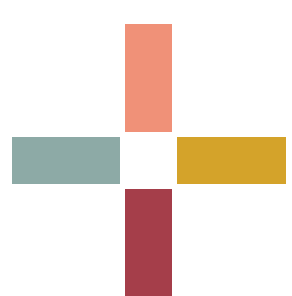
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01. Introduction



This document aims to serve as a tool to include sustainability principles in the organisation of events, both public and private, and **thus contribute to the Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) promoted by la Junta de Andalucía in the framework of the 2030 Agenda.**

It is especially designed for meetings such as congresses, conferences, seminars, forums or presentations, regardless of their duration or subject matter. Although it is not aimed at popular festivals, sporting events or concerts, the criteria set out above can also be useful in their organisation as they share many common elements.

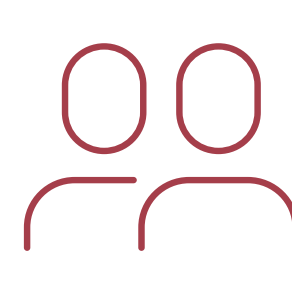
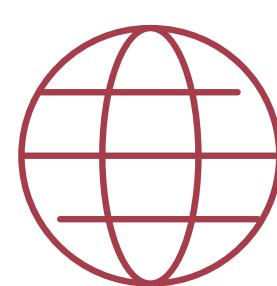
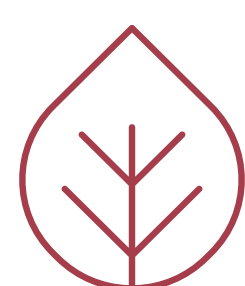
In addition, it can be of great help to organisers, partners and participants involved in any phase of the event.

02. Defining a sustainable event



A sustainable event is one that is designed and developed with a view to reducing its adverse effects on the natural, social and economic environment, while at the same time promoting a lasting positive impact on the host community.

Definition based on the principles of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



03. How to incorporate sustainability in the organization of events?

The organisation of an event is not just about the day or days of the event, but also involves the execution of tasks before and after the event.

Commitment to sustainability is an aspect that must be included in all phases of the event, from its planning to its closing.

Preevent

Planning:

The basic characteristics of the event are defined.

Organisation:

Work begins to give shape to the event: the facility where the event will take place is selected, service providers (catering, technical secretariat, etc.) are contracted, communication aspects are defined, the program is prepared, etc.

Set-up:

Assembly of structures, adaptation of the facilities, etc.

Event

Celebration:

The event is held at the place and on the date planned.

Postevento

Dismantling of structures.

Evaluation and report:

Once the event is over, its degree of sustainability is assessed and the results obtained are reported.

03.01.

Fundamental elements

The starting point is to establish the essential aspects of the event, for example:

- The objectives pursued and the nature of the event.
- Who it is aimed at.
- Place and date of the event.
- Estimated number of participants.
- Estimated duration.
- Other relevant factors.

It is important to assess whether a ‘face-to-face’ format is really required and, if appropriate, to consider the option of incorporating virtual connections or combining formats. When selecting the location, it is important to:

- Ensure that it is close to the usual environment (residence or work) of the attendees.
- Opt for locations that are well connected by public transport.

03.02.

Activities and resources required

From the basic definition, the structure of the event is specified, identifying essential activities and services, which in turn will influence decisions related to sustainability. These include:

- Determination of the space where it will be held.
- Booking of accommodation for speakers, attendees and technical team.
- Site preparation through design, assembly and disassembly of infrastructures.
- Restoration and catering services.

- Communication strategies before, during and after (inscriptions, signage, documentation, promotional items, etc.).
- Organisation of the movement of people and materials.
- Programming of parallel events (visits, social events, etc.)
- Contracting additional services: waste management, cleaning, security, room support, sign language interpretation, among others.

03.03.

Stakeholders and interest groups

At this stage, it is also essential to determine who the relevant stakeholders are.

Stakeholders are those groups or individuals who, in one way or another, influence the event or may be impacted by it:

- Staff involved.
- Persons attending.
- Supplier companies.
- Public institutions.
- Surrounding community: neighbours, associations, etc.

The key actors whose involvement is essential for the effective implementation of the event must also be identified.

Subsequently, the environmental, social and economic impacts derived from the organisation will be analysed in order to plan actions to reduce the adverse effects and reinforce the beneficial ones.

03.04. Environmental implications

Refers to any action or service linked to the event that impacts, positively or negatively, on the natural environment.



Energy consumption

This consumption comes mainly from:

- Air conditioning and lighting systems of the space.
- Electrical and electronic equipment (sound, image...)
- Human and material displacements.
- Energy used in the accommodation.



Water and wastewater use

Water is used both in the development of the event and in associated services (catering, cleaning, accommodation), generating wastewater that must be treated appropriately.



Material use

The need for materials is manifested in multiple aspects: adaptation of spaces, graphic and communicative elements, kits for attendees or consumable materials in catering (disposable tableware, napkins, etc.).



Waste generated

A variety of waste is produced at all stages of an event. The main ones are associated with the preparation of the space, especially when structures are set up or dismantled, communication campaigns are carried out or catering services are provided.



Greenhouse gas emissions

Events usually involve:

- Displacement of people (organisation, attendees, suppliers) and goods, with the consequent emission of CO₂ and other gases.
- Consumption in facilities (event venue, hotels, etc.) which, depending on their efficiency, may have a greater or lesser impact.
- Production and transport of materials, whose impact will vary depending on their origin, type of manufacture and distance travelled.



Noise pollution

Music, crowds and loudspeaker announcements can create a nuisance in the environment where the activity takes place.

03.05.

Social implications

They include any action of the event that has an impact on people or groups with whom there is a relationship (employees, attendees, suppliers, citizens, etc.).

Health and safety

Protecting the physical integrity and well-being of those participating or working at the event is essential.

Working conditions

All existing occupational health and safety regulations must be complied with, both in ordinary contexts and in exceptional situations (as was the case with COVID-19).

Diversity, inclusion and equality

Fair and equitable treatment of all staff, both internal and external, and a working environment free of discrimination must be guaranteed.

Community engagement

It is essential that the event is accessible in all its dimensions: physical spaces, recruitment processes and activities, with special attention to diverse groups.

Training

The staff involved must be adequately trained to perform their role in an environmentally and socially sensitive manner.

03.06.

Economic implications

They cover all those aspects that involve economic interaction with the agents in the environment.

Boosting the local economy

The event can be a driving force to dynamise local sectors through the purchase of products and the contracting of local services.

Satisfaction of the participants

A positive experience improves the perception of the organiser and can strengthen its position in the sector.

Based on these elements, the objectives should be established and the concrete actions that will guide the sustainable development of the event should be designed, thus consolidating its roadmap.

Given that its preparation may require the intervention of different organisational areas, the sustainability plan should at least include:

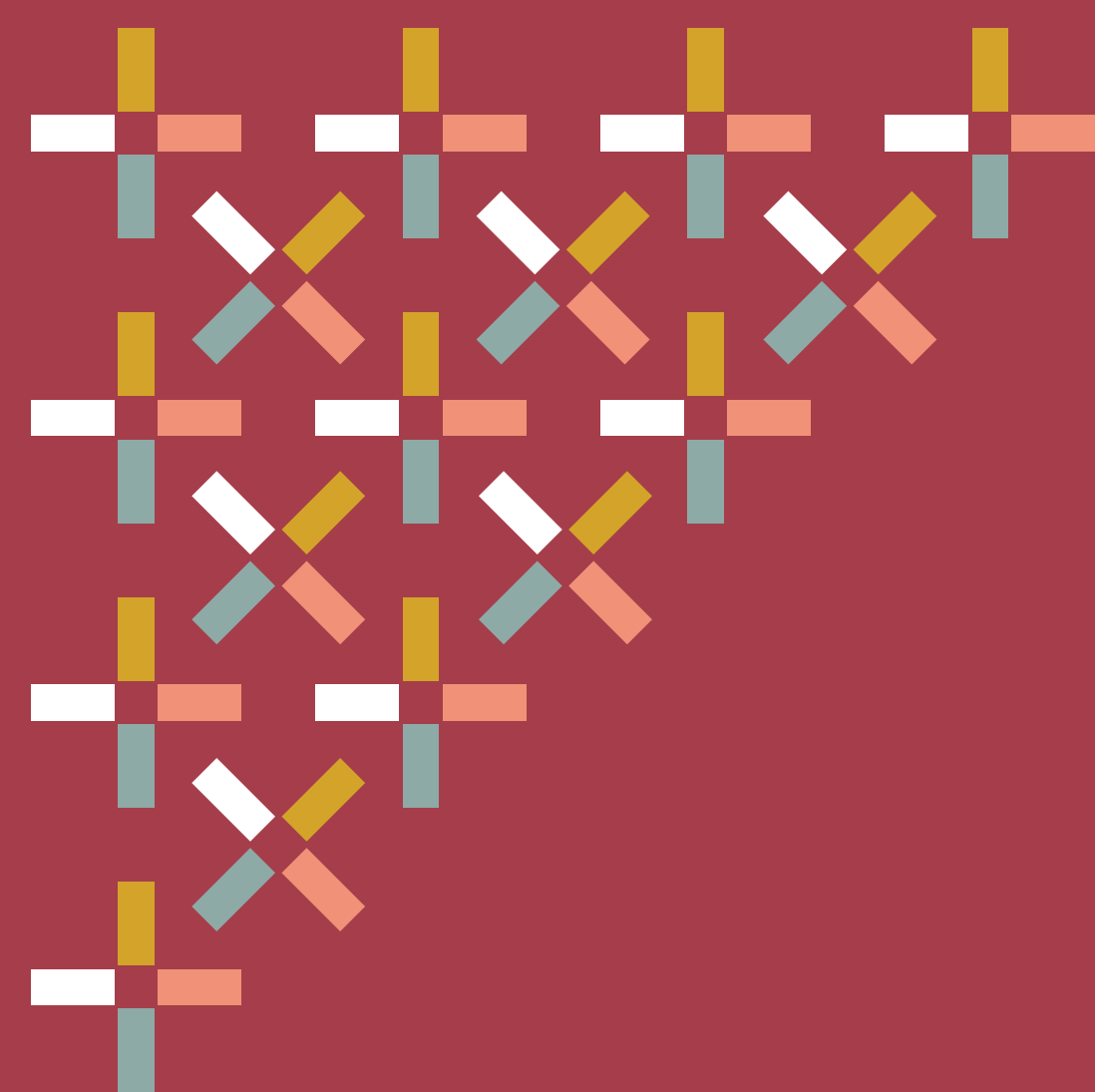
- Actions to be implemented.
- Responsible for each action.
- Stage of the event at which each measure should be applied (planning, implementation, closure).
- Planned schedule.
- Agentes involucrados.
- Indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

Once the activity has been completed, it will be necessary to review the effectiveness of the measures taken and the degree of sustainability achieved, as well as to communicate the results obtained.

A best practice is to link this evaluation to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, as an international reference framework.

04.

Sustainability in events



Sustainability in events

Aligned with the principles of the Agenda 2030 and the Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, the organisation of any event should consider the following key elements:

Design a sustainability plan

that includes, at least, the actions to be implemented, the people responsible for executing them, the corresponding deadlines and the indicators for monitoring them.

Appoint a coordinator

to oversee the implementation and verify compliance with the defined sustainable actions.

Communicate appropriately

to the technical team, suppliers, collaborators and contractors the actions planned in terms of sustainability, requesting their active involvement and highlighting their role in the continuous improvement of the event.

Disseminate among staff and public participants

the sustainability initiatives adopted and inform them on how they can contribute in their role to achieve a more environmentally responsible event.

Calculate the carbon footprint of the event

and implement offsetting measures according to established methods, tools and recommendations.

Calculating the carbon footprint of the event

All events must estimate the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, expressed in tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, generated during the event.

The calculation shall be based on ISO 14064-1 and shall include, as a minimum, emissions related to:

- Energy consumption in the event facilities.
- The use of water in these spaces.
- The travel expenses of the organising team and the people participating as speakers.
- The journeys made by the attending public.
- The generation and correct separation of waste by typology.

Additionally, the impact associated to:

- The accommodation and catering services contracted, taking into account their energy and water consumption, as well as the waste generated.
- The production, transport and distribution of graphic material, merchandising elements and other products purchased for the event.

Accurately counting the tonnes of CO₂ generated allows us to know in detail the environmental impact of each activity and to assess the effectiveness of the sustainable measures adopted.

The ultimate goal is to reduce this footprint as far as possible. Once all reduction actions have been implemented, non-avoidable emissions can be offset as part of a strategy towards carbon neutrality.

Offsetting the event's carbon footprint

Offsetting the footprint involves investing in a project that guarantees an equivalent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, in another geographical location.

This practice makes it possible to balance those emissions that, for technical, economic or strategic reasons, could not be reduced directly.

Given that global warming is a planetary-scale problem, offsetting is an effective tool, provided it is used according to strict criteria.

Organisers must decide whether to offset all or only part of the emissions generated.

Offsetting actions must comply with the basic principles defined by the **Oficina Andaluza de Cambio Climático**:

Reliability

Choose carbon credits that represent real, verifiable and additional reductions.

Transparency

Clearly communicate the criteria, calculation methodology, offset emissions and the project selected.

Rigour in communication

Detail the scope of the emissions addressed, the reduction measures already implemented and the criteria for the selection of the offset project.

Key Actions

Good practices are described below by policy area, with the aim of facilitating their incorporation into the sustainability plan.

In addition, an annexed spreadsheet is provided to help structure this planning.

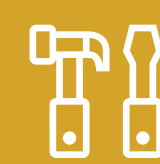
Choice of venue



Accommodation of participants



Design, assembly and disassembly



Catering and restoration services



Sustainable mobility



Cleaning of facilities



Communication and promotional elements



Parallel activities



Other aspects



04.01. **Choice of venue**



Prioritise spaces that have environmental certifications (EMAS, ISO 14001, ISO 50001, LEED, etc.) or documentary evidence of their commitment to sustainability.

Location close to public transport stops

Within 300 metres and accommodation accessible on foot.

Facilities for sustainable mobility

Bicycle parking, electric charging points, videoconferencing connection.

High energy efficiency

Natural lighting, sectorised air conditioning, use of renewable energies or with guarantees of origin, low-consumption devices.

Selective waste collection system

Visible signage, correct separation and final treatment.

Water saving

Timed taps, dual flush toilets, flow reduction mechanisms.

Accessible spaces

Following universal design criteria.

Sustainable decoration

Reusable or living elements, avoiding single-use products.

04.02.

Accommodation of participants



Selection of hotels with environmental certificates or solid commitments to sustainability.

Location close to the event

Less than 1 km away or with good public transport connections.

Energy efficiency measures

In addition to water management and waste minimisation, including separate collection.

Consumption of renewable energy

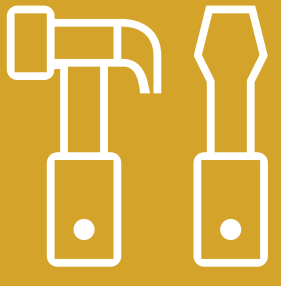
Either through self-consumption or purchase with certificate of origin.

Accessibility

Universal accessibility in the facilities.

04.03.

Design, assembly and disassembly



Prioritise rental of materials over purchase

If purchased, use reusable or recycled items, preferably with FSC or PEFC certification.

Avoid carpets

Unless they are rented or recyclable.

Establish agreements with social entities

To reuse materials at the end of the event.

Ensure selective waste collection system during set-up and dismantling

With personnel to inform on waste circuits.

Record the quantities generated by type of waste.

Establish agreements with social entities

To reuse materials at the end of the event.

To guarantee selective waste collection system during assembly and dismantling

With personnel who report on waste circuits.

04.04.

Catering and restoration services



Encourage the consumption of local products

Fresh, seasonal and ecological.

Avoid single-use packaging

Use reusable or compostable tableware.

Use napkins and tablecloths made of cloth or recycled paper.

Presentation of food without individual portions

Promote bulk consumption.

Use labelled and correctly located waste containers.

Training staff in waste management.

Prevent food waste

Adjusting quantities to the real number of attendees.

Donate surpluses to social organisations

Whenever feasible.

Clear communication about the origin of products and surplus management.

Allergen information

Available to all staff.



04.05. **Sustainable mobility**

To inform attendees and organising staff about the sustainable transport options available.

Adapt schedules

To facilitate the use of public transportation.

Promote transfers

In groups or shared.

Incentivise the use of sustainable transport

For example, free public transport tickets.

Offset emissions

Possibility of offsetting attendees' transport emissions on an individual basis.

In the event of contracting transport, we recommend:

- Vehicles suitable for the volume of people to be transported, ensuring high occupancy.
- Fleets with an environmental label (eco or zero emissions).
- Personnel trained in efficient driving.
- Provision of data for calculating emissions.

04.06. **Cleaning of facilities**



Products with official ecolabels

Cisne Nórdico, European Ecolabel.

Preferential use of concentrated products.

Preferential use of bulk formats.

Correct waste and packaging management.

Staff training

In efficient use of resources and safety in the use of products.

Protocols

In the event of accidental spills.

Proper disposal of waste generated during the service.

04.07.

Communication and promotional elements



Reusable materials

No dates limiting future use and made of reusable materials.

Encourage digitisation

Make use of electronic badges to avoid the use of paper and plastics.

Inclusive communication

Free of stereotypes and respectful.

Sustainable gifts:

- Preference for cultural experiences or products with low environmental impact.
- Made from recycled, renewable or reusable materials.
- Minimal packaging and no unnecessary plastics.
- Long shelf life and practical function (e.g. reusable bags, solar chargers, etc.).



04.08. **Other aspects**

Responsible hiring:

Favour local, insertion or social economy companies.

Promote measures of conciliation, equality and diversity in the contracting of services.

Value the environmental commitment demonstrated through certifications (ISO 14001, EMAS, etc.).

Inclusive events:

Ensure universal accessibility, including resources for people with sensory diversity.

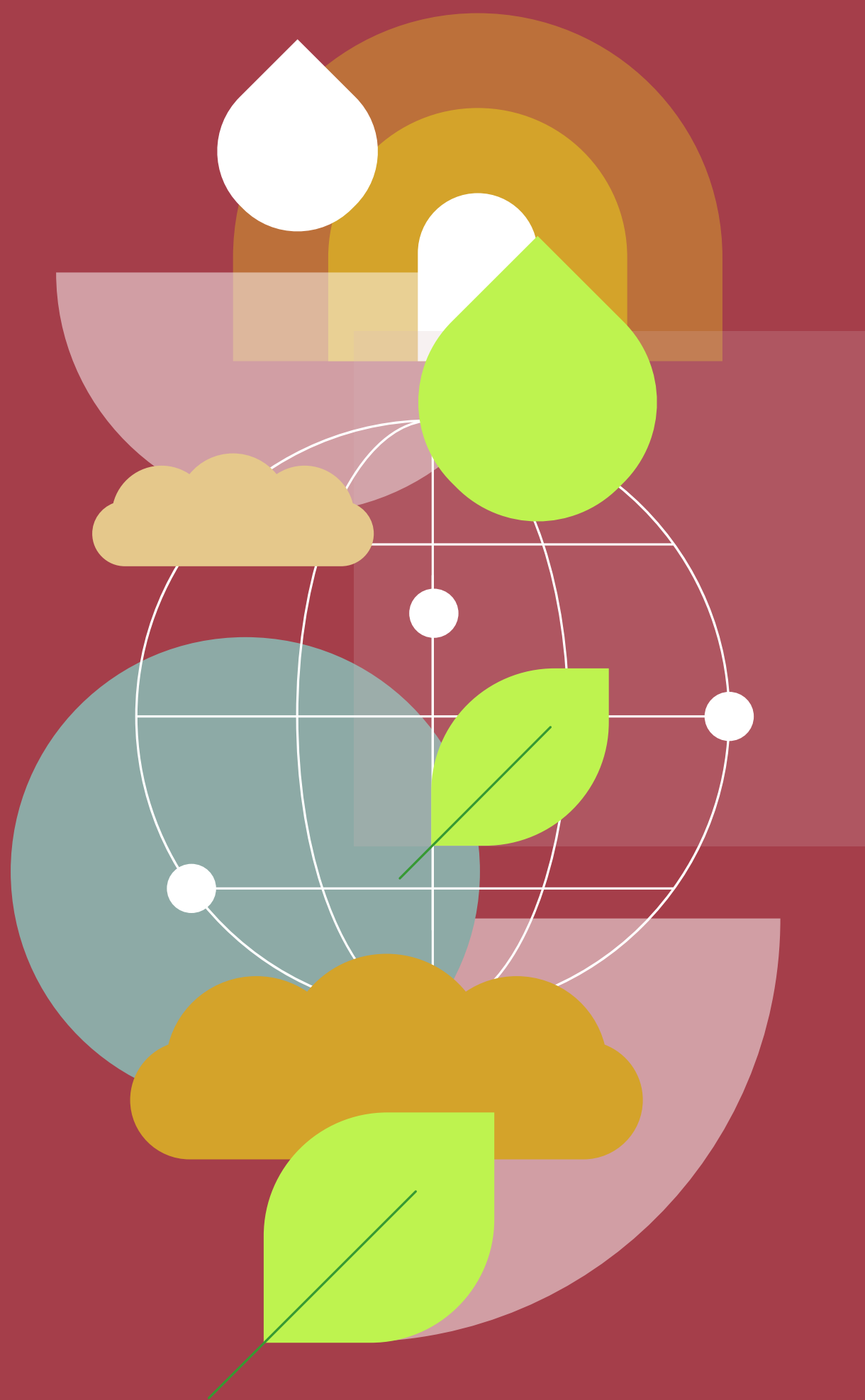
During registration, allow attendees to communicate specific needs.

Parallel activities

Actions complementary to the event (technical visits, social events, etc.) should be in line with the sustainable measures adopted.

Establish criteria for these activities that reinforce the sustainability objectives.

Monitoring, measuring and controlling the sustainability of the event



Appointment and functions of the person in charge of sustainability

As mentioned above, a person **must be designated to take responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the sustainability plan** and monitoring the measures established.

The role of this person will be crucial to ensure the correct implementation of the plan, and he/she will have to carry out different tasks in each of the phases of the event, which are detailed below:

Before the event

Organisation and coordination

Integrate sustainability as a fixed point on the agenda of all general coordination meetings.

Establish the frequency of contact with those responsible for each action, either through face-to-face or virtual meetings, email or other systems, depending on the complexity of the actions and the number of people involved.

Definition of key indicators

Determine the indicators needed to assess the sustainability of the event, and communicate to the people involved what data should be collected. Possible indicators include:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, expressed in tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.
- Amount of offset emissions (in tonnes of CO₂eq).

- Volume of waste generated, classified by type and management system.
- Quantity of water, energy and materials consumed.
- Impact on the local community.
- Communication and information actions carried out.

For each indicator defined, the following elements should be specified:

- Indicator name.
- Unit of measurement.
- Person responsible for collecting and providing the data.
- Source of information.
- Calculation formula.

Formalisation of actions

Gather all documentation evidencing the actions taken (contracts with suppliers, mailings to participants, signed agreements, etc.) and ensure that they reflect the commitments made in the sustainability plan.

During the event

Monitoring of measures

Verify on the ground that the planned actions are being implemented correctly. This review shall include the collection of evidence, the detection of possible deviations and the identification of improvements for future editions.

The person in charge of monitoring should travel to the event site and observe the actual implementation of the measures in place (e.g. functioning of the selective collection system, application of sustainable criteria in catering, etc.).

This verification can be complemented by interviews with the staff involved.

Recording of results

To document this phase, a specific section can be added to the plan where the observations made, the non-compliances detected and the recommendations for improvement are recorded.

As a complement, a direct consultation system (such as short surveys) can be set up for the people attending to collect their perception of the sustainable measures implemented.

To document this phase, a specific section can be added to the plan where the observations made, the non-compliances detected and the recommendations for improvement are recorded.

As a complement, a direct consultation system (such as short surveys) can be set up for the participants to gather their perception of the sustainable measures implemented.

After the event

Evaluation and communication

Once the event is over, a general balance sheet will be drawn up to assess the degree of compliance with the planned actions and their real impact.

The results must be communicated in a clear and accessible way to the people and entities involved (organising team, attendees, suppliers, etc.).

This information can be included in a final report, the proposed structure of which is included at the end of this guide, and which can also serve as a support for future public or internal communications.

Bonus: A good practice

A particularly useful recommendation is to evaluate the results of the event in relation to the Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS). Linking the actions of the sustainability plan to the ODS makes it possible:

- **Measure** the extent to which the event contributes to the 2030 Agenda.
- **Communicate** achievements in line with international standards.
- **Identify** areas for improvement or reinforcement for future editions.



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