



SUSTAINABLE EVENT GUIDE

An inspirational guide to making
your event more **sustainable**

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WELCOME

The Sustainable Event Guide offers concrete suggestions for sustainable initiatives that you can incorporate into your event. If you are organising an event and want to implement more sustainable solutions, then this guide is for you.

The guide is not intended to be an exhaustive list of initiatives, and it is important to bear in mind that becoming more sustainable is an ongoing learning process.

The initiatives in the guide are primarily based on the experiences of the organising team behind the Sustainable Consumption Conference that was hosted at Copenhagen Business School in June 2018.

Besides the concrete suggestions offered in this guide, we also offer a case-based view of how the initiatives were implemented at the Sustainable Consumption Conference. Additional initiatives to the ones implemented at the conference are illustrated with other case examples.

You will find a list of all the suppliers and resources mentioned throughout the guide at the end of the booklet.

Thank you for taking the time to consider how you can reduce the environmental footprint of your events.

CBS Sustainability



KEY LEARNINGS

FOOD AND CATERING

Vegetarian meals

Replacing meat-based meals with vegetarian meals is both an effective and easy way to reduce the environmental impact of your event catering. **Page 9**

Water supply

Consider the duration and number of participants at your event to determine which water supply option will be more sustainable. **Page 10**

Minimising food waste

Plan your catering around the number of participants who have indicated that they will attend the meals and donate leftover food to a homeless shelter or another charitable organisation. **Page 13**

Dining out

Choose restaurants that focus on organic food, vegetarianism or some other sustainable concept to show event participants how sustainable cooking can taste. **Page 13**

WASTE REDUCTION

Sorting waste

Ensure that the waste sorting efforts have been coordinated with the relevant departments in your organisation so that the sorted waste ends up being disposed of correctly. **Page 14**

Reuseable tableware

Using reusable ceramic or porcelain tableware is a much more sustainable option than disposable tableware because it can be used again and again. **Page 16**

Name tags

Encourage participants to return their name tags and lanyards after the event so they can be reused for later events, and make sure to order name tags in sustainably sourced materials. **Page 17**

Reducing paper use

Consider what needs are served by the different instances of paper use at your event, and then consider alternative ways to satisfy that need. **Page 17**

GUESTS AND VISITORS

Sustainable businesses

Giving sustainable businesses a platform to showcase their products and practices helps drive sustainable change and shows support for their sustainable visions. **Page 20**

Presenters

Prioritise filling your event programme with speakers from your local area who won't need to travel long distances or by plane. **Page 21**

Transportation

Encourage attendees to avoid flying whenever possible, and when it cannot be avoided, ask them to consider ways to reduce the environmental impact of their flight. **Page 21**

Accommodation

Encourage your event participants to choose a sustainable accommodation option and to consider the ways they can reduce their environmental footprint during their stay. **Page 22**

PROCUREMENT

Green decorations

With rented potted plants, you have more freedom to choose plants that fit the ambience and decorative purposes. **Page 24**

Organic cotton products

For events that require event specific apparel or other cotton products, order the products from a sustainable supplier. **Page 24**

Speaker gifts

Sustainable speaker gifts can be treats, experiences, gift cards, or donations in the speaker's name. **Page 25**

LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENTS

For the Sustainable Consumption Conference, the organisers allied themselves with a group of students from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) in order to identify the most sustainable solutions for the conference. The detailed reports can be found on www.cbs.dk/sustainability/resources.

The DTU students conducted life cycle assessments (LCAs) to determine which water supply and catering options would be most sustainable from a cradle-to-grave perspective.

WATER SUPPLY

The LCA for the conference's water supply compared three different options: reusable glass bottles, single-use cardboard cartons, or single-use plastic bottles. The glass bottle was more sustainable for the four day event where it would be used many times.

The LCA results showed that after seven uses, the glass bottle is the most sustainable solution when compared to both the cardboard and plastic options.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

For the catering, a vegetarian and a meat-based menu were compared. The LCA examined food ingredients, transportation, cooking processes and waste treatment.

By switching to the vegetarian menu, the environmental footprint of the conference's catering was reduced by 44 percent compared to the meat-based option. Additionally, the LCA identified impact 'hot-spots', such as berries imported from the US.





FOOD AND CATERING

Vegetarian meals

A vegetarian menu is the sustainable initiative that requires the least effort from the event coordinator while yielding the greatest results. Don't be afraid to challenge your participants and bring them out of their comfort zone.

Most caterers will be happy to help put together a tasty vegetarian menu for the event. You can also consider including options to accommodate other dietary restrictions, for example veganism, gluten allergy and lactose intolerance.

If you decide to investigate how to make catering even more sustainable, you can consider factors such as local, seasonal and organic produce.

Case

According to the LCA of the menu at the Sustainable Consumption Conference, replacing meat meals with vegetarian meals reduced the environmental impact of the catering by up to 44 percent (see page 6).

After the conference, participants praised the quality and taste of the food. They were happy to eat vegetarian, especially when the environmental benefits of meatless meals were communicated.

Water supply

The two main considerations when you choose the water supply for your event are event duration and the number of attendees. A water supply option might be sustainable for a long event, but unfeasible in practice if there are too many attendees.

Your default choice should always be to have water in jugs with glasses, and then to start considering alternative options for larger events.

For long events

Reusable glass bottles are a more sustainable solution than single-use plastic bottles after seven refills. This makes the glass water bottles a suitable option for longer events spanning several days.

Water coolers should be made available at the event so that the participants can easily refill their bottles. Rent them through your caterer or directly from a company.

Case

The Sustainable Consumption Conference had around 200 participants over four days, and this made the glass bottle option suitable.

Glass bottles, already filled with water, were lined up at the registration table for participants to take when they registered and received their name tag. Participants were not allowed to have more glass bottles, as that would make the solution unsustainable.

Glass bottles were bought from Retap and water dispensers were rented through Dansk Kildevand.

For events with many attendees

If the event has many attendees, it can be difficult to execute the glass bottle solution well. Failure to coordinate the bottle hand-out or ensure that participants keep their bottle can make the solution unfeasible.

Denmark has an exceptional refund system which counteracts a significant amount of the negative environmental impact of single-use plastic bottles. Sometimes, they can be an acceptable solution when there are no better alternatives.

To minimise the negative impact of plastic bottles, add a paper sleeve with information about the refund system and instructions for participants to refill the plastic bottle instead of taking a new one when it is empty.





Minimising food waste

Popular estimates indicate that around one third of the world's food production goes to waste.

Ask your event participants in advance which meals they are planning to attend, and then arrange catering accordingly.

If you still have good, edible food left after the event, consider donating it to a nearby homeless shelter. The simplest way to find a homeless shelter near you is through the internet.

On occasion, homeless shelters receive food donations from other charities and local organisations. Before you deliver food to one of these institutions, remember to call the staff to ask if they need any more food.

Dining out

Dining out allows your participants to try some delicious food that might not be within the scope of event catering. It is also an excellent opportunity for them to try one of the many sustainable restaurants or cafés in Denmark.

If you need inspiration for sustainable restaurants, check out Økologiske Spisesteder (Organic Eateries), an app created by Visit Denmark and the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food.

Case

Leftover lunch bags were delivered to a homeless shelter after the Sustainable Consumption Conference.

Staff was assigned to organise the leftover food into portions, place it in containers and deliver it to the shelter. Ask your caterer about their options for food waste containers.

Case

The Sustainable Consumption Conference included a dinner at the restaurant Josty in Frederiksberg.

At the request of the organisers, a vegetarian dinner menu was developed for the event so that it would be in line with the all-vegetarian plan for the conference.

WASTE REDUCTION

Sorting waste

Valuable resources can be recycled and repurposed when you sort waste.

The best way to sort waste depends on your organisation's capabilities and your venue's facilities. Ensure that you know what types of trash can be recycled at your event venue before ordering or renting recycling bins.

It is also a good idea to specify for the participants how the trash should be sorted, for example by instructing them not to throw dirty or soiled paper into the paper waste bin.

Case

Remember that not all event participants will have experience with recycling.

The waste at the Sustainable Consumption Conference was sorted into paper, plastic, bio waste, and general waste, but most of the trash had to be hand sorted by the event staff afterwards.

Recycling bins were ordered from DropBucket, a company that creates sustainable cardboard waste bins.



Reusable tableware

Disposable paper plates and coffee cups might be the easy option but consider replacing them with reusable products.

Products such as ceramic or porcelain plates and mugs can be reused, and their overall environmental impact is reduced with each use.

It will be more difficult to arrange having ceramic mugs and plates if you have a lot of participants, as this will require more effort in terms of removing the used tableware and cleaning it. Make sure that you consult with your caterer about this in advance.

Case

Recyc-Québec, an organisation which promotes recycling in Québec, conducted a comparative life cycle assessment of ceramic mugs and disposable coffee cups at restaurants.

The study found that the ceramic cups were the most sustainable option when they were reused at least 200-300 times – a number which is easily reached when the mugs are reused for many years.

Name tags

Order name tag card holders in biodegradable materials such as PLA, which is sourced from corn, potatoes or sugar, and find name tag lanyards in eco-friendly materials like bamboo or recycled polyester.

Encourage participants to return their name tag after the event to reduce unnecessary waste, and make sure that returning them is easy and simple.

Case

At the Sustainable Consumption Conference, DropBuckets were set up at the exits after the event for participants to return their name tags and lanyards.

Sustainable name card holders in PLA are produced in Denmark by office supplier 3L Office, and lanyards in recycled polyester can be ordered from Ikast Etiket.

Case

At the Sustainable Consumption Conference, information about the programme was displayed on a few large A-frame signs placed around the venue.

Additionally, general information was available through the event app. The app was developed using the free app development tool Sched.

Make sure that the information is easy to find and that the participants receive instructions on where to find it.

Reducing paper use

When you consider paper reduction initiatives, think about what needs are served by the different instances of paper use at your event.

Usually, it will be possible to find another way to address that need to reduce or eliminate paper use.

Digitalising some of the event elements which would otherwise require paper can save a significant amount of paper.

You can also use large printed posters to display general information, such as the event programme.



GUESTS AND VISITORS

Sustainable businesses

Incorporating sustainable businesses into your event adds value both through the product or service they offer, and through the signal their presence sends to event participants.

Sustainable businesses drive sustainable change, and by making these businesses visible at your event, you help push the sustainable agenda forward.

For example, you can order wine for your reception from a sustainable local supplier or invite representatives from relevant sustainable businesses to be guest speakers at your event.

Case

At the Sustainable Consumption Conference, sustainable businesses were involved in a business fair at which the conference participants were able to learn about sustainable practices in a variety of different areas of business.

For the business fair, each business presented their product at their own stands which were visited by the attendees.





Presenters

When you plan the event programme, make it a priority to invite presenters who do not need flight transportation.

First think of locally based practitioners, academics and speakers who might specialise in the relevant field and who can either take the train, bus or car.

If you would like to invite international speakers, consider the flight distance in order to reduce the environmental impact.

In those cases where you cannot avoid flying in a speaker by plane, you can take steps to minimise the environmental impact of flying. See concrete steps below.

Transportation

To reduce the emissions from transportation, encourage your participants to consider ways to travel besides flying.

Here are five prioritised steps to minimise the impact of flying, starting with best practice:

- 1 Entirely avoid flying in favour of transportation by train or car
- 2 Minimise the distance flown
- 3 Choose minimal impact routes and airlines by consulting with Atmosfair's Airline Index
- 4 Fly directly to the destination without layovers
- 5 Compensate by offsetting through reputable companies such as Atmosfair

Case

The SDG Task Force at CBS has developed a recommendation for a flight policy which encourages the school's staff to reduce their plane trips to events around the world.

Whenever travelling cannot be avoided, the flight policy suggests using other means of transportation besides flying, for example taking the car or public transportation.

Accommodation

According to Visit Denmark, over 70 percent of the hotels in major cities like Copenhagen and Aarhus have eco-label certifications, making it very easy to find accommodation with sustainable policies.

Some of the most common certifications your guests can look for are the Nordic Swan Label, the Green Key, and the Organic Cuisine Label.

Guests can also book their stay through a responsible hotel booking site such as Goodwings, which donates a share of its commission to charity.

Case

The American Anthropological Association has a hotel policy which it promotes to all its members when they are out of town for an event. It involves tips like:

- Bring your own toiletries from home or maximise the usage of the hotel toiletries, for example by using the same bar soap in the shower as you use at the sink.
- Reduce the need for daily hotel cleaning services such as fresh towels and room cleaning by displaying the 'do not disturb' sign.

You can encourage your participants to actively consider the environmental impact of their accommodation as a part of your communication and engagement strategy.



PROCUREMENT

Green decorations

Whether you are aiming for a business-feel or a more casual setting, potted plants are a great and versatile decoration.

Furthermore, potted plants can be preserved and reused for a long time with the right care.

Case

The Sustainable Consumption Conference was held at CBS campus Kilen, which was decorated with small potted trees that were placed all around in the atrium.

The organisers rented the potted plants from FIRMA Botanik. After the conference, FIRMA Botanik picked up the plants again.

Case

At the Sustainable Consumption Conference, white organic cotton T-shirts were used both as an identifier for conference staff and as a medium to communicate short, poignant messages about the conference's sustainable initiatives.

The Fairtrade organic cotton T-shirts with custom prints were ordered from Savvy Copenhagen.

Organic cotton T-shirts

Organic cotton production consumes less water than conventional production, releases far less greenhouse gases and requires no pesticides, making it safer for both the environment, the production labourers and the wearer.

Prioritise getting organic cotton items for T-shirts, gift bags or other orders for your event.

Speaker gifts

Send a message about your event by selecting sustainable speaker gifts that leave a lasting impression and spark conversation.

Speaker gifts can be many things: treats, experiences, gift cards or donations made in the speaker's name, just to name a few. There are many options, and speaker gifts are a great opportunity to get creative. If you need inspiration for gifts, you can find a list of ideas for different types of speaker presents below.

Case

Speakers at the Sustainable Consumption Conference were gifted with a mushroom growth set from TagTomat, a sponsorship certificate for reforestation projects from Greenpop, and chocolate from Social Foodies, all three things placed in a Social Foodies flax bag.

Inspiration for gift ideas

Gift cards

- A coffee subscription from Ønsk www.onsk.dk
- Carbon offsetting from Rensti www.rensti.dk

Gift baskets

- Insect snacks www.dininsektbutik.dk
- Organic locally produced wine www.tuemosegaard.dk

Mushroom growth kit

- Oyster mushrooms from TagTomat www.tagtomat.dk

Sustainable chocolate

- Organic chocolate from Summerbird www.summerbird.dk
- Socio-economic treats from Social Foodies www.socialfoodies.dk


Reforestation certificate

- Reforestation in Africa from Greenpop www.greenpop.org
- Rainforest or Danish reforestation from Verdens Skove www.verdensskove.org

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

It is crucial to communicate what the attendees can expect and why certain initiatives have been implemented in order to get everyone on board with the sustainable efforts.

At the Sustainable Consumption Conference, the reasons behind the initiatives were communicated to the event participants in the following manner:



Information on event website: The conference website had a subpage with information about the sustainable initiatives.

E-mail notice: Prior to the conference, all participants received an e-mail informing them about the sustainable initiatives.

Focus on initiatives in welcome speech: The sustainable initiatives were highlighted in the conference's welcome speech.

T-shirts with key messages: The conference staff wore sustainable organic cotton T-shirts with simple key messages about the impact of the vegetarian meals and the glass bottles.

Informative posters and signs: Posters with information about the benefits of the glass bottles and the vegetarian meals were displayed around water dispensers and catering tables.

Photo and video documentation: High quality photos and a video crew documented the sustainable initiatives so that the ideas and experiences could be shared after the conference.

Social media engagement: Participants were encouraged to share their experiences from the conference on social media.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of the most important purposes of having sustainable initiatives at your event is to create a forum for enthusiasm and conversation about sustainability among the participants.

Through good communication and engagement, participants are more likely to be inspired by and responsive to your sustainable initiatives.

As the conference coordinator, always ask what you can do to help event participants and staff with the implementation of the initiatives.

Hosting events in new and more sustainable ways requires the collaboration of everybody involved. If everyone is motivated and ready to help, it can be a great process of shared learning and mutual inspiration.

Thank you to the VELUX Foundations for sponsoring the production of this guide. Thank you also to Spisestuerne for their contributions to the guide, including their willingness to test the initiatives and share vital data with the guide's creators.

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CONTACT AND SUPPLIERS

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SUPPLIERS

3L Office (through Lyreco)

Biodegradable name tags
www.3loffice.com

Atmosfair

Carbon offsetting
www.atmosfair.de

Dansk Kildevand

Water dispensers
www.danskkildevand.dk

DropBucket

Waste sorting bins
www.dropbucket.com

FIRMA Botanik

Plant rental service
www.firmabotanik.dk

Goodwings

Charitable hotel booking
www.goodwings.com

Ikast Etiket

Recycled polyester lan-yards
www.ikastetiket.dk

Retap

Reusable glass bottles
www.retap.com

Savvy Copenhagen

Organic cotton T-shirts
www.savvycph.com

Sched

Free app building tool
www.sched.com

Spisestuerne

Catering
www.spisestuerne.dk

SOURCES

Life cycle assessments on water supply and catering from DTU for the Sustainable Consumption Conference
www.cbs.dk/sustainability/resources

Life cycle assessment on coffee cups from Recyc-Québec
www.recyc-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/a-propos/gouvernance

'Green your meeting' tips from the American Anthropological Association
www.americananthro.org

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If you have comments or feedback, feel free to send an e-mail to sustainability@cbs.dk.

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