CARBON SMART EVENT GUIDE

Australian National University

How to use this guide

ANU has a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. On-campus events are a vital component of the ANU experience but are also a source of emissions.

This guide was developed using four guiding principles from the ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Framework and is designed to assist you in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with your events.

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For more general events planning advice see ANU Events toolkit.

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Guiding Principles

Commit
Seek commitment from all key event stakeholders to increase your likelihood in designing a sustainable event. Plan to hold discussions around reducing emissions at the conception phase of the event and include costs for reduction strategies in your budget.

Plan
Identify any aspects of your event that may generate scope 3 emissions, and allow time for discussion, changes, or innovations to be made.

Implement
Implement sustainable alternatives for your catering, waste management, procurement of items, and attendee activities such as travel.

Assess
Conduct an audit of your scope 3 emissions and use as a baseline to compare with future events. Key areas for data collection may include waste, estimated GHG emissions, travel data, materials, and attendee feedback.
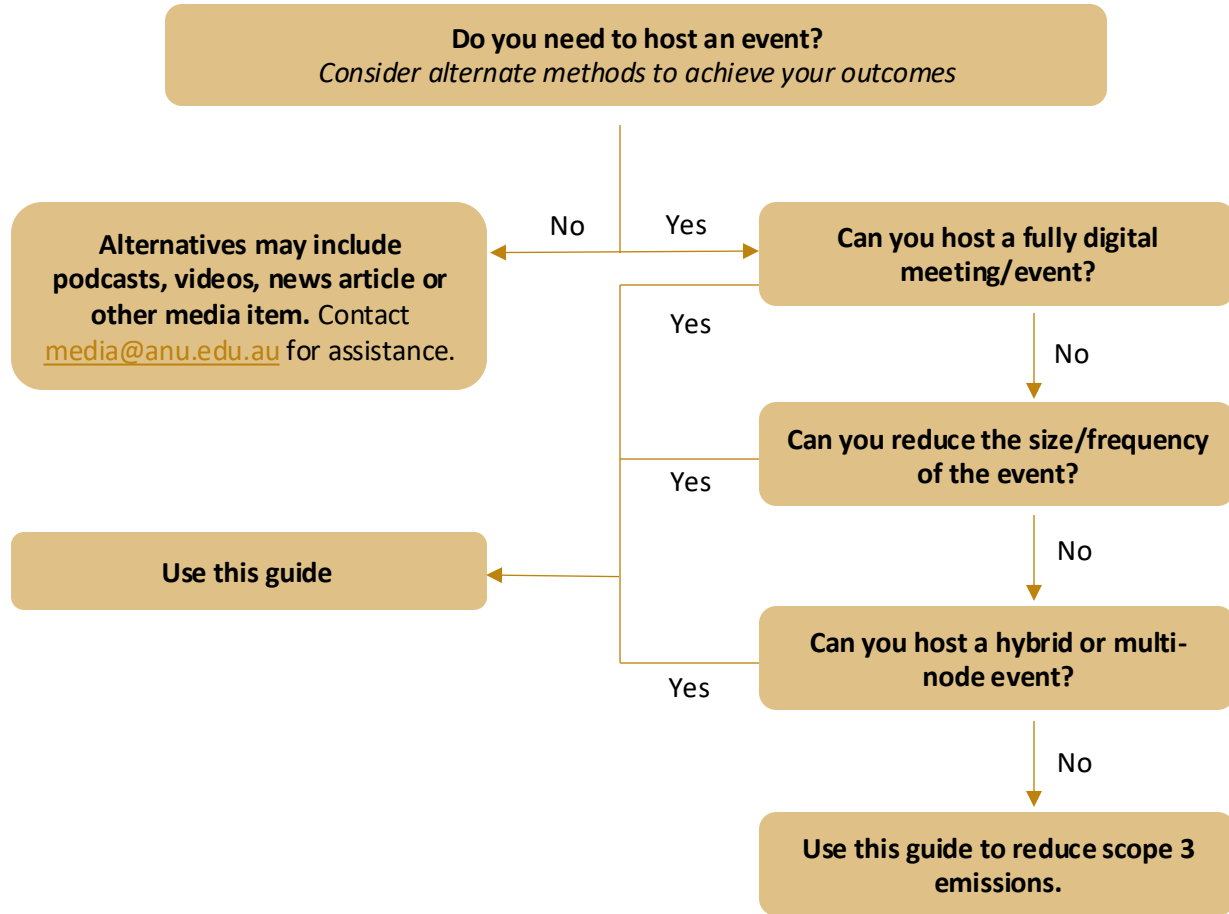
Event Design

Do you need to host an event?

Are there other ways that you can encourage engagement with your content or achieve your outcomes?

See the ANU Communications and Engagement event design guide for ideas and recommendations on how best to promote engagement.

Do you need to host an event?
Consider alternate methods to achieve your outcomes

No ← → Yes

Alternatives may include podcasts, videos, news article or other media item. Contact media@anu.edu.au for assistance.

Can you host a fully digital meeting/event?

Yes

No

Can you reduce the size/frequency of the event?

Yes

No

Use this guide

Can you host a hybrid or multi-node event?

Yes

No

Use this guide to reduce scope 3 emissions.

Event Design

Lower emissions options

Fully Digital Events
Digital events significantly cut emissions*.
To assist with planning – please see Going Digital – Quick Event Guide.

Reduce size and frequency of in-person events
Reduce the size of events by limiting to key stakeholders or reducing the frequency of events by hosting a digital event one year, and an in-person the following year.

Hybrid events
Hybrid events contain both digital and in-person elements and not only reduce emissions, but can increase engagement to sider audiences.

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Multi-node events
Multi-node events contain multiple local elements across various locations.
Multi-node events can cater for in-person connection, and limits travel

Less emissions ➝ More emissions

*It is acknowledged that hosting a digital meeting/event does still emit GHG emissions from activities that would not have happened otherwise (i.e. network data transfer energy use, lifecycle of digital devices etc). However, a recent study (Faber, 2021) indicated that up to 66% of emissions can be reduced by hosting digital only events

Catering

Does your event require catering?
Can you host a BYO event instead?
Can you time your event to be between usual meal-times?

Can you host an event with morning or afternoon tea instead of lunch, or a reception instead of dinner?

Ask participants to confirm if they will be eating at the event to avoid over catering and generating waste.

Ask participants their preferences if you are serving more than one option. I.e. would they prefer a pastry or yoghurt pot for morning tea to avoid over catering options.

Ask the caterer to reduce portion sizes, or to hold back food and replenish as needed so that it can remain refrigerated and used the following day, or safely donated.

Avoid over catering for 'just in case'? Advise caterers on accurate attendee numbers.

Consider offering whole fruit instead of fruit plates so the fruit can be reused or donated.

Consider a vegan or vegetarian menu.

Leftover food can be donated around campus (ANUSA) or to places such as Communities@Work, OzHarvest or St Johns Care.

Catering

Drinks
Serve tap water in jugs with glass cups, and tea/coffee in crockery where possible.

Request participants bring their own water bottles and keep cups.

Purchase fairtrade certified products wherever possible.

Host non-alcoholic events.

Suggested Caterers
See the Sustainable service providers* shared document for a list of caterers that have sustainable practices.

To understand if a caterer is sustainable you can check that they:
- ☐ Have a sustainability policy
- ☐ Use local suppliers where possible
- ☐ Offers seasonal selections
- ☐ Emphasise vegan and vegetarian options
- ☐ Reduce/eliminate waste
- ☐ Composts food scraps (both before, during and after event)

*The sustainable service providers list can only be accessed **by ANU staff and students** through a University SharePoint account.
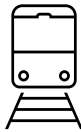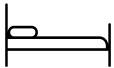
People, Travel and Accommodation

People
Invite international or interstate to participate digitally.

If in-person presenters are preferred, try to prioritise those that do not require air travel.

Where this cannot be done use the ANU carbon smart travel guide.

Accommodation
Consider accommodation that is close to the event venue to minimise travel, are members of the Sustainable Development Partnership, and have sustainability policies.
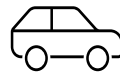
Travel
Host all activities in the same venue, or within walking distance.

Encourage shared vehicle travel using maxi-cabs.

Encourage attendees to use active travel to get to and from the event venue. Provide information about how to cycle, walk or travel via public transport to and from event venue.

Encourage carpooling by attendees. If possible, allow local participants to connect and decide where appropriate.

Reducing Waste

Reduce and reuse waste by using items such as re-useable coffee cups, drink bottles, and marketing material.

Consider compostable items for your items that are considered necessary waste, but be sure to understand the difference between biodegradable and compostable.

Check with suppliers if their 'biodegradable' packaging or products are compostable, or only biodegradable.

- **Biodegradable packaging** disintegrates in landfill or nature more rapidly, but this process can take many years and leave toxic residues and micro-plastics .
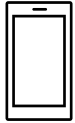
- **Compostable packaging** decomposes naturally, either in industrial compost facilities or more simple composting systems like home systems.

Home Compostable

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ABAP 20007

Waste is mostly generated by catering, promotional materials, and decorations.

Avoid waste wherever possible. Where you cannot avoid, reduce and reuse as much as possible.

Reducing Waste

Go Digital
Communicate through digital platforms
Use mobile apps or digital documents instead of printed programs.

Swap poster sessions for digital presentations. Ask sponsors/exhibitors to provide digital assets instead of physical ones.

BYO
Ask participants to bring their own pens/paper/water bottles/bags and compendiums.
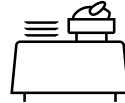
Encourage attendees to bring their own reusable bottles/mugs. If feasible, incentives for this behaviour could be implemented (i.e. free coffee, discounted registration).

Suppliers
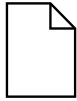Use ceramic plates, metal cutlery and mugs/glass cups.

Request caterers use reusable tableware and supply food in reuseable containers instead of plastic film.

Ask suppliers to avoid wrapping items in plastic film. Alternatives can be paper bags, or reuseable containers.

Reducing Waste

Sorting Waste
Use biodegradable and easily compostable paper for name tags in lanyards and collect lanyards at the end of every event.

Use clearly identified bins for recycling, organic waste, and landfill waste for your attendees.

Ensure you are monitoring the level of the bins, and swap them out when full.

Request attendees/ exhibitors and suppliers leave with everything they brought with them.

Reuse communications tools
Reuse as many existing materials as you can, or design signs and banners to be reused for future events.
- Avoid dates or specific information on banners/ wayfinding signs
- Avoid custom build stands or displays
- Use generic ANU banners (ask events@anu.edu.au to borrow theirs)
- Use digital monitors instead of printed signs

Gifts
If it is necessary to provide gifts to presenters, consider giving a donation in their honour to a charity, environmental program, or local consumable product.

GET IN TOUCH

For practical support or ideals on running your low-carbon event talk to the ANU events team, if you have questions about the guide contact the Below Zero team.

E: events@anu.edu.au and belowzero@anu.edu.au

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Resources used to develop this guide

Below is a list of resources utilised to put together our low carbon events guide. You may find these resources useful to delve deeper into your low emissions events journey.

- ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Framework
- Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods
- Catering to the Climate: How earth-Friendly Menus at EVents can help save the planet
- Case study: omnivore and vegetarian diet comparison at a sustainable consumption conference
- Life cycle assessment (LCA) of reusable and single-use coffee cups
- Reusable vs. Disposable cups revisited: Guidance in life cycle comparisons addressing scenario, model, and parameter uncertainties for the US consumer
- Plastic-free events (Adelaide University)
- Is the reusable tableware the best option? Analysis of the aviation catering sector with a life cycle approach
- The impacts of relocating a logistics facility on last food miles
- The case of Melbourne's fruit and vegetable wholesale market
- Consumption choices to decrease personal carbon footprints of Finns
- Food miles or carbon emissions? Exploring labelling preference for food transport footprint with a stated choice study
- An overview of the waste hierarchy framework for analysis the circularity in construction and demolition waste management in Europe
- Waste hierarchy index for circular economy in waste management