
Sustainable Events Guide

Developed with support from
the Sustainability Committee



INTRODUCTION

In a world of diminishing resources, RMIT aims to be a leader in sustainability. This includes not only providing sustainability education and research, but also leading by example in University operations. This sustainable events guide provides the guidelines for students and staff to create successful events that foster a strong sense of community, while also minimising negative impacts on the environment.

This Guide is a practical tool for both in-house teams or external providers to create a successful and sustainable event. The guide also aligns with the **RMIT Strategic Plan** to create a more sustainable campus, particularly in relation to Goal 4, Priority 4 - Improve environmental sustainability' and the RMIT Sustainability Policy.

Different types of events

There are many different types of events at RMIT, many of which have different requirements. This guide is designed to be applicable to events of different scales to conduct university functions in accordance with sustainability principles.



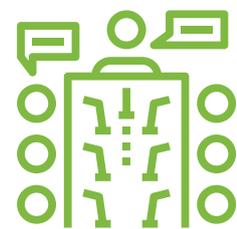
Small in-office meetings



Large on-site events



Large off-site events



Formal meeting/conference



What is a sustainable event?

A sustainable event is one that **aims to be economically viable, socially just and environmentally sound.** To this end, the impact of all aspects of the event, including its location, food services, energy consumption, transportation and waste generation must be considered. The goal is to reduce environmental impact, add value to the local economy, engage the university and wider community and educate those involved.

What are the benefits of a sustainable event?

- Reduces costs
- Minimises environmental impacts
- Promotes corporate social responsibility
- Supports local suppliers
- Enhances our reputation and image as a sustainable university.

How to use this guide:

This guide is divided into key sections that outline different aspects of an event. Each section offers suggestions for how to better improve sustainability.

Accompanying each section is a table with **Good: Better: Best** scenarios which combine to help you guide your event planning and management. The end of the guide has a sustainability checklist where you can measure the impact of your event plan.

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FOOD & WATER

Make sure it's seasonal, and locally produced.

We have become used to being able to buy most foods all year round from the supermarkets. This seems very convenient and makes preparing food much easier, however the environmental costs are huge. Food has to be shipped from somewhere else in the world where the season is right, that takes a lot of fossil fuels. It also takes a lot of energy to replicate conditions to grow an out of season vegetable. For this reason **hiring a caterer who only uses in season produce is a good environmental decision.**

A number of on-site cafés have sustainable or ethical practices. One of the best examples is the RMIT University Student Union (RUSU) run cafe called Realfoods. The cafe supplies vegetarian food that is fairly sourced, local and seasonal.

There are a number of great organisations on the approved RMIT catering panel that offer catering that is socially and environmentally conscious. For specific details about our preferred caterers and their sustainability initiatives visit the RMIT Catering Panel page www1.rmit.edu.au/fs.

Fair Trade

Fairtrade is about stable prices, decent working conditions and the empowerment of farmers and workers around the world. RMIT is a Fair Trade University and as such we have committed to providing Fairtrade products at our events. Tea, coffee, sugar, chocolate and a whole range of other products are available with Fairtrade certification, just look for the Fairtrade Mark.



Consider vegetarian food

In Australia we have access to a lot of good quality meats, and it has become a daily staple. However, meat has considerably more embedded resources in its production. A single serving of meat creates approximately 5 kilograms of greenhouse gasses. Not only is it more environmentally friendly to serve vegetarian food at an event, but it is also more convenient and hygienic as the food is more likely to keep with less need for refrigeration for the duration of an event. Having vegetarian food will also help cater for people with dietary requirements.



Provide water refill stations

Australia emits 60,000 tons of Greenhouse gasses per year on packaging and transport of bottled water. That is a huge amount considering that we get fresh, clean water plumbed into nearly every household and business for more than 1000 times less than the cost of a bottle of water. This does not even include the problem of disposing of all those plastic bottles.

For all of these reasons it is unacceptable to promote bottled water through a university event. Instead encourage participants to bring their own reusable bottle and make clearly direct people to the closest water refill station (there are many around the RMIT campus). For conferences provide water stations with jugs of water and glasses for delegates.

Things to consider



Good



Better



Best

	Good	Better	Best
Choosing caterer	Find a caterer who will follow sustainable guidelines for sourcing food	Get catering through sustainable providers on our preferred catering panel	Work with your caterer to develop a low impact menu
Environmentally friendly	Only serve locally sourced food	Make sure the food is seasonal and fairtrade	Switch to vegetarian local, seasonal and fairtrade foods
Water	Don't sell or give out bottled water	Encourage participants to bring reusable water bottles & provide directions to water taps	Provide water stations for people to fill up their bottles or glasses

Useful Links

The Victorian EPA guidelines on food sustainability
www.epa.vic.gov.au/~media/Publications/1219.pdf

Cool Australia's educational resource
www.coolaustralia.org/bottled-water-secondary





WASTE

Wherever a large group of people meet, especially when food is on offer, there will always be waste to be cleaned away after the event. Before holding an event firstly, think about how waste can be avoided, what materials can be reused, then finally consider the various waste streams that may be produced and whether they can be recycled.

Minimise waste

The best way to deal with waste is to try to avoid it from the outset. When you are planning an event, think about how you might be able to reduce the amount of single-use products that are given out. For example, if you are serving drinks at your event, ask the participants to hold onto their glasses and bring it back for a refill. Use crockery not single-use packaging and offer discounts to participants for their sustainable behaviour is a good way to encourage waste minimisation i.e. coffee discounts for using Keep Cups. It is also important to think about your number of delegates and the amount of food they could eat during the event to ensure you don't over cater.

Sort out your recycling

It is important that your event provides enough bins for the waste and recycling that is expected to be generated. You need to work out what waste streams you will provide (e.g.. general waste/ mixed Recycling/ paper and cardboard). Each bin area should have a clearly labelled receptacle for each type of waste that will be separated.

Where possible supply reusable or recyclable and biodegradable packaging, crockery and cutlery at your event. This will help reduce your waste to landfill footprint.



If your event is held at RMIT, the following waste streams are available:



- Food scraps
- Food waste
- Plastic wrapping
- Plastic bags
- Used stationary
- Polystyrene



- Aluminium Cans
- Steel Cans
- Clean Aluminium Foil Food Trays
- Hard plastic containers coded 1-7 (except polystyrene)
- Milk Bottles
- Cordial and Juice Bottles
- Ice Cream, Yoghurt and Take Away Containers
- Glass bottles and jars
- Paper (unwaxed) coffee cups



- Paper
- Newspaper
- Envelopes
- Manilla envelopes
- Phone Books
- Post-it notes
- Small cardboard

For additional bins, please log a request with Property Services, Service Desk at least two days before the event:

Tel: 03 9925 2111
 Email: propserv.service.desk@rmit.edu.au
 Web: www1.rmit.edu.au/propertyservices/contact

For more information about recycling visit www.rmit.edu.au/recycling





Reduce food waste

RMIT does not currently have a compost collection service. However, if you are running a sustainable event and you are providing food to participants, you might consider separating out the food waste from the general waste to have it composted.

It is important to ensure that you cater correctly for your event, so that any food wastage is at a minimum. Good quality leftover food may also be redistributed to others through a number of organisations.

Have you over catered? Contact an organisation such as Oz Harvest to take good quality leftovers.
www.ozharvest.org/news/ozharvest-melbourne-opens

Things to consider



	Good	Better	Best
Providing Bins	General Waste and Mixed Recycling next to each other	Encourage event caterers and stall holders to recycle	Arrange compost bins from a collection service
Labelling Bin Areas	Clear colour-coded labelling to differentiate each bin	Additional labels with lists of items appropriate for disposal in each bin	Additional labels with clear images of the types of items appropriate for recycling
Waste	Plan to avoid waste though reuse, correct portions and less packaging	Use recyclable catering items	Redistribute leftover food to charity



ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Engaging the local community

Get the community on your side by engaging local organisations as partners. There may be local groups who will have an interest in supporting your sustainable event financially (donating the funds to purchase the carbon offsets), providing in-kind support (lending you a bus for a shuttle or electrical equipment) or simply by plugging your event to their contacts or in their social media.

Networking is about creating community and supporting each other. Make sure you pay back their good will by letting everyone know of their helpful support. Think about supporting local social enterprises through your catering, merchandise or services. For overnight accommodation, provide attendees with a list of good local hotels with a sustainable ethos.

Engaging the RMIT community

RMIT is a large university with a vibrant community. There are a lot of different groups on campus with a range of goals and objectives. When different departments collaborate on events, you can get extra exposure, distribute costs and build a stronger community. When you have an idea for an event, get in contact with other departments to see if you can work together.

Things to consider



Good



Better



Best

	Good	Better	Best
Engage the Local Community	Let local community partners know about your event	Help promote local community groups through your event communication	Bring local community groups in as event partners
Engage the RMIT Community	Contact other University departments and let them know about your event	Invite other departments to attend your event	Partner with other departments to host a collaborative event



TRANSPORT

Most transport is powered by fossil fuels which emits harmful Greenhouse gasses and contributes to pollution. Transport in Australia makes up 16% of our total Greenhouse Gas emissions. While transport is an essential part of university events, new technology is making it easier to mitigate and in some areas eliminate burning of fossil fuels from transport altogether.

Virtual Events

Technology has come a long way, and a great way to cut down on transport costs and emissions is to create a virtual event. Not only does this provide great benefits for the environment, but it creates broader opportunities for both delegates and attendees in being able to attend. RMIT has facilities to teleconference, video conference, record sessions and host virtual conferences.

Active Transport

Walking or cycling is a great way to get to and from an event as it promotes exercise, health and reduces emissions associated with transport. Consider choosing an event venue that is within walking distance from central services, such as hotels and restaurants, with good bike lane access and bike parking facilities.

Public Transport

The venue should be close to public transport. There should be clear instructions for delegates and attendees on public transport routes and how to purchase tickets for out of town delegates. Provide them with information on the free-tram zone in the CBD. RMIT has great facilities to host events close to public transport. Delegates that arrive from interstate or from international locations should be provided with options for sustainable transport methods.

If air travel is necessary, think about organising flights that arrive at a similar time, so that delegates can share transport. There are regular 'Skybus' shuttle buses from the airport into the city. Additionally, if you are hosting a large conference it might be convenient to organise a shuttle services.



Logistics

Think about the start and end times of your events, allow enough time for people to walk between venues and / or accommodation. If you can avoid peak times it can reduce travel times and congestion, equally ensure the event ends before public transport services stop (public transport operates all-night on weekends). Provide clear maps to your venue, showing key public transport options.

Things to consider



Good



Better



Best

	Good	Better	Best
Virtual Events	Video conference speakers who live overseas	Live stream the event for distance attendees	Conduct the event entirely online
Active / Public Transport	Provide a shuttle service for large events	Provide public transport information to the venue	Encourage attendees to walk or cycle to your event
Logistics	Think about start and finish times	Provide suggested travel times and routes	Provide clear maps showing public transport options

Useful Links

PTV Journey Planner
www.ptv.vic.gov.au/journey

Guidance on RMIT Video Conference Support
www1.rmit.edu.au/staff/it/videoconferencing

SkyBus - Airport Bus
www.skybus.com.au





PROCUREMENT

Giveaways and materials

If the event provides an attendance bag of goodies, more often than not, the bits and pieces that the participants do not want will be left behind. The most sustainable option is to not provide freebies or giveaways. However, if promotional materials are required, consider useful, reusable and environmentally friendly products

Cheap plastic and mass produced items have a large environmental and social cost, so try to choose quality locally made products that people will find useful. The embodied resources will be completely wasted if the participant throws the item away as they leave the conference. It's even better if the product you choose will help a participant make sustainable choices even when they leave the conference.

Here are some suggestions:

Fairtrade cotton conference tote bags can be reused by the participant to replace plastic shopping bags.

Choose environmentally friendly stationery items that they can print with your branding. It is easy to find reusable Keep Cups that provide branding online. They are very popular and help reduce disposable coffee cups.

Brand an environmentally friendly USB stick to store the event information. There are many types made from wood or bamboo instead of plastic. Participants will be able to re-use this to store their own information.

Provide experience gifts rather than giveaways, i.e. tree planting, sponsor a charity on behalf of delegates.

To encourage people to avoid buying bottled water it is a great idea to give them reusable water bottles with your brand.

If you do choose to provide branded materials, remember not to add dates or specific information which may date the produce and prevent you from using them at a future event.

Do not provide printed delegate guides or leaflets, electronic guides can be as simple as a pdf emailed to delegates or a page on your website. The information can then be accessed from anywhere and edits can be made simply (don't forget to provide free wifi to delegates on the day). If you do have to print information, ensure it is a small amount with double-sided printing on FSC accredited or 100% recycled content paper.

For large events use an app such as 'Guidebook' to provide the delegate pack and program information.



Hire or borrow equipment

If equipment is needed for the event, consider borrowing or hiring it. Every appliance has a high level of embodied resources. This is the quantity of resources that were used in the production of the product. For this reason hiring, or borrowing should be attempted before purchasing anything new.

RMIT has great facilities and equipment that can be hired by staff or students for free, such as the AV Loans Department www1.rmit.edu.au/its/avloans. Alternatively if they do not have the equipment you need it is likely to be much more cost effective to hire the equipment rather than purchasing something new. However, if you do need to purchase equipment, do some research and **find sustainable products with minimal plastic, sustainably sourced materials, and high energy efficiency ratings.**

Decorations

Think about how you decorate a space for an event, not considering sustainability in this area can considerably undermine you messaging. Here are thinks to consider:

- Balloons are extremely unsustainable - they cause litter and are harmful to wildlife.
- Cut flowers look great but don't last long - consider decorating tables with pot plants and place a card under one chair at each table so that an attendee can win them as a prize to take home.
- Invest in reusable banners and bunting that can be used each time you have an event (member not to date them)
- Be creative - engage with a local school group to have them make decorations for you out of recycled materials or ask RMIT students to display their coursework.

Things to consider


Good


Better


Best

	Good	Better	Best
Giveaways and Materials	Cut out the plastic items. Buy branded items made from environmentally friendly materials	Only distribute branded items that help participants make sustainable choices	Don't provide items and distribute materials electronically
Sourcing Equipment	Buy equipment with sustainably sourced materials and high efficiency ratings	Hire equipment	Loan equipment from RMIT



ENERGY

A lot of thought should be put into the selection of an event venue. The size of the event should dictate the size of the space. If the event is small then it is no good having it in a large venue that will require a lot more energy to provide adequate lighting, to amplify sound and to keep the temperature comfortable. Keep venues close by to reduce travel during the event.

Full details of RMIT bookable venues can be found online:

www.rmit.edu.au/events/venues-for-hire

Outdoor events

If you are running an event during the day and the weather is good, you should consider using an outdoor space. This will save on using lighting, and heating and cooling. Outdoor events also create a great atmosphere, and are often cheaper to access than indoor spaces.

Electrical equipment

Many appliances have energy saving standby mode but they are still using energy. When appliances stop being used they should be turned off. You might consider getting an energy meter to keep track of how much energy you are using. If you need a PA system, get advice about how much amplification you need. There is no need of more than a few speakers if you have a small crowd and no live music.

Showcase SUPP

Let your attendees know that RMIT is strongly committed to transforming its own built environment to create sustainable and resilient cities.

Through the Sustainable Urban Precincts Program (SUPP) we have committed \$128 million to cut energy and water use and greenhouse gas emissions – the biggest program of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

SUPP will reduce electricity use over eight years by an estimated 263 million kilowatt hours, leading to a 32,000-tonne reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Water use will be cut by an estimated 53 million litres per year. For more information visit www.rmit.edu.au/SUPP



Setting the temperature

Heating and cooling are often necessary for indoor spaces. **The recommended temperature range to optimise indoor thermal comfort for most people is 18°C to 26°C.** This will create a comfortable environment and will keep the heaters and air-conditioning running efficiently (see the 'RMIT Thermal Comfort Instruction' for further details).

Always make your event attendees aware that they should dress appropriately for the seasonal conditions. For winter events suggested additional layers, as people can sit for some time in one position. For summer events, provide additional water and ensure event attendees are sun-safe.

Carbon offsets

A number of offset providers can help you calculate the emissions from an entire event to offset. For the travel that attendees organise themselves, encourage them to offset their emission by providing details to airline carbon offsetting schemes which can usually be included as a small extra fee when booking flights.

Things to consider


Good


Better


Best

	Good	Better	Best
Venue	Find an appropriately sized venue for the amount of people attending	Keep the venue temperature within a 18°C to 26°C band, ask people to dress appropriately	Host an outdoor event and tell your delegates about SUPP
Electricity	Get the appropriate equipment for the number of people and the size of the space that needs amplification	Turn all electrical equipment off when it is not in use	Calculate the carbon and offset the event



COMMUNICATION & EVALUATION

It is important to keep track of the event and how you might be able to improve in the future.

Evaluation and reporting

- Conduct a survey to get feedback
- Report on what worked and where to improve

Before the event

Make sure you plan out your event thoroughly. Get quote on sustainable options and weigh them up against the non-sustainable options. Sometimes it is not feasible to buy the most sustainable products, but it is good to be aware of them so you can reassess in the future.

During the event

Watch how your event participants are using the space. Did you place the bins in the right place? Did you order too much food? This is a good chance to see how people behave and think about how you can improve. Speak to your event attendees and ask them what they love about the event and what you can improve on next time.

After the event

Once the event has been completed, you have a valuable opportunity to make an assessment on how you did and how you might improve in the future. What was the hardest thing to achieve? What could you have done better if you had more time? If you write a short summary of ways you can improve, it will make your next sustainable event much easier to execute.

Don't forget to spread the word about what worked well and help others hold sustainable events



Take your 'green' promotion online!

With the popularity of online media taking your promotion online is not so much a 'green' choice as much as just a smart choice. Cut out the paper and get in touch with someone who can list and promote your event online. Consider linking the event to the RMIT event calendar. You can also advertise on RMITV, SYN Media, the RMIT website or Facebook page. For RMIT Marketing and Communications visit www1.rmit.edu.au/eve/marketing-communications.

Make sure you highlight the sustainability of the event, let everybody know that you are doing paper-less promotions, and mention other green choices that you have made. When organising an event, mention the importance of RSVP's to your guests. This will help to improve event facilitation and reduce the likelihood of over catering.

Things to consider



	Good	Better	Best
Before the Event	Take your promotions online	Cut out the paper-flyers and poster	Let everyone know of your commitment to sustainability in your promotions!
During the Event	Watch event participants to see how they are using the space	Speak to event participants about their experience	Take notes on what you see so you can write up report after the event
After the Event	Provide an online evaluation survey	As part of the online survey ask about the sustainability priorities of your delegates	Add sustainability ideas to your events checklist for future use

SUSTAINABLE EVENT CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used when organising event as a quick guide to see if you are incorporating sustainability into your practise.

Place a tick in 'applicable' and then in the appropriate box (if not applicable leave it blank).

FOOD & WATER		Applicable?	 Unsustainable	 Good	 Better	 Best
Choosing caterer			No sustainable catering option	Find a caterer who will follow sustainable guidelines for sourcing food	Get catering through sustainable providers on our preferred catering panel	Work with your caterer to develop a low impact menu
Environmentally friendly			Out of season produce	Only serve locally sourced food	Make sure the food is seasonal & fairtrade	Switch to vegetarian
Water			Using disposable bottled water	Don't sell or give out bottled water	Encourage participants to bring reusable water bottles & provide directions to water taps	Provide water stations for people to fill up their bottles or glasses

WASTE		Applicable?	Unsustainable	Good	Better	Best
Providing Bins			No Bin Provided	General waste and mixed recycling bins provided next to each other	Encourage event caterers and stalls to recycle	Arrange compost bins from a collection service
Labelling Bin Areas			No Labelling	Clear colour-coded Labelling to differentiate each bin	Additional labels with lists of items appropriate for disposal in each bin	Additional labels with clear images of the types of items appropriate for disposal
Waste			No waste minimisation	Plan to avoid waste through reuse, portions and less packaging	Use recyclable catering items	Redistribute leftover food to charity

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY		Applicable?	Unsustainable	Good	Better	Best
Engage the Local Community			No engagement with local community	Let local community partners know about your event	Help promote local community groups through your event communication	Bring local community groups in as event partners
Engage the RMIT Community			No engagement with RMIT community	Contact other University departments and let them know about your event	Invite other departments to attend your event	Partner with other departments to host a collaborative event

Once you complete the checklist, you can tally your results and get a sustainability score. Use this score in promotion or to help improve your events in the future.

TRANSPORT		Applicable?	 Unsustainable	 Good	 Better	 Best
Virtual Events			No virtual component	Video conference speakers who live overseas	Live stream the event for distance attendees	Conduct the event entirely online
Active / Public Transport			No transport information	Provide a shuttle service for large events	Provide public transport information to the venue	Encourage attendees to walk or cycle to your event
Logistics			No consideration	Think about start and finish times	Provide suggested travel times & routes	Provide clear maps showing public transport options

PROCUREMENT

Giveaways and materials			Give away cheap plastic promotional products	Cut out the plastic items.	Only distribute branded items that help participants make sustainable choices	Don't provide items and distribute materials electronically
Sourcing equipment			Buy inefficient equipment for a single use	Buy equipment with sustainably sourced materials & high efficiency rating	Hire equipment	Loan equipment from RMIT

ENERGY

Venue			No consideration of venue size or heating/cooling needs	Find an appropriately sized venue for the amount of people attending	Keep the venue temperature within a 18°C to 26°C band, ask people to dress appropriately	Host an outdoor event and tell your delegates SUPP
Electricity			Event has high energy requirements	Get the appropriate equipment for the number of people and the size of the space that needs amplification	Turn all electrical equipment off when it is not in use	Calculate the carbon and offset the event

COMMUNICATION & EVALUATION



Applicable?

Unsustainable

Good

Better

Best

Before the Event		Using nonrecyclable materials to promote event	Take you promotions online	Cut out the paper-flyers and poster	Let everyone know of your commitment to sustainability in your promotions!
During the Event		Not considering participants experience	Watch event participants to see how they are using the space	Speak to event participants about their experience	Take notes on what you see so you can write up report after the event
After the Event		No evaluation survey	Provide an online evaluation survey	As part of the online survey ask about the sustainability priorities of your delegates	Add sustainability ideas to your events checklist for future use

TOTAL

Count the ticks

Total Applicable	Total Red x 3	Total Yellow x 3	Total Orange x 9	Total Green x 12
=	=	=	=	=

SUSTAINABILITY SCORE

TOTAL SCORE / TOTAL APPLICABLE =

0 - 3

POOR - You might want to rethink some of your event features.

4 - 6

GOOD - You have made some sustainable choices, but you could think greener.

7 - 9

BETTER - You have put in a strong sustainability effort, think how you can improve next time.

10 - 12

BEST - Great work, you should help others be as sustainable as you are!

For more information about this guide contact the Sustainability Team

sustainability@rmit.edu.au

