

ASTRO 3D Guidelines for Minimal Environment Impact Conferences and Meetings

With any gatherings that bring large numbers of people together, there are implications for the environment, whether it is increased traffic, more litter and food waste, or higher energy bills. We need to be mindful of the impact our in-person events have on the environment and the consumerist tendencies we've developed and come to expect (freebies, anyone?).

A sustainable event aims to:

- Conserve and restore resources
- Honour and support those involved
- Add value to the local economy
- Educate participants, spectators, staff and volunteers about the benefits of sustainability. Making them more likely to feel engaged and in turn think about minimising their impact on the environment whilst continuing to enjoy the event.

Event organisers:

1. **Make it local** –

- a. if it's possible and you can choose, go for a local event, with local attendees and speakers
- b. Think about using local services instead of outsourcing to international companies that happen to have their headquarters in the city where you'll be holding the event – local caterers and suppliers shortens the distance your food travels and reduces its carbon footprint, as well as being more socially responsible by supporting the community in which you're holding the event
- c. Are there opportunities for volunteers?
- d. Perhaps the event can provide valuable work experience for students

2. **Travel** –

- a. Handy to public transport, walking or cycling and have incentive schemes for people to use them (prizes, points etc)
- b. Has space for people to park their bikes
- c. Has charging stations for electric cars
- d. If guests need to bring a car, ask them the car share and facilitate that process
- e. Offer hotel rooms nearby the day venue
- f. Think about their air travel carbon footprint, especially if the distances aren't too long. Why is a long flight better than a short one, you might be asking? According to an article published by The New York Times, "The longer the distance, the more efficient flying becomes, because cruising requires less fuel than other stages of flight."

- g. Consider virtual or hybrid events, especially if you have large numbers of international guests.
 - h. Offset emissions – some travel is unavoidable, in these cases, it's possible to offset emissions in other ways, compensating by funding an equivalent carbon dioxide saving elsewhere, usually via carbon offset projects
3. **Venue** –
- a. Does the venue have a sustainability policy? What's in it? If the venue is equally committed to environmental efforts, you'll be on the same page from the beginning and they'll provide you with more support and inspiration.
 - b. Does the venue aim to use renewable energy sources?
 - c. Does the venue have smart electricity meters to find out how much electricity is being used?
 - d. Does it have natural light? We're all quite familiar with claustrophobic venues with no windows and artificial light. Natural light will not only improve your attendees' mood and make them feel more energized and engaged, but also helps you save money and reduce your event's carbon footprint.
 - e. Does the venue use low energy lighting?
 - f. Have an event waste plan - Like it or not, every single event generates plenty of waste. From biodegradable cups to paper programs, there are plenty of things you'll be throwing away (some of them not being eco-friendly at all). On average, a single guest discards 1.89kg of waste per day, of which 1.16kg is landfill materials. To put this into perspective, that's the equivalent of 2.6 (or 3480 kg) weight of compact cars for a 3-day 1000 person event going to landfill each time." So when you're planning the event, figure out how to manage waste, which means putting a recycling process into place. The goal is to help your attendees recycle and maintain the venue easily.
 - g. Is the venue accessible for all guests? (see our Inclusive Events Guidelines for more information).
4. **Catering**
- a. Ask caterers/suppliers for their sustainable food sourcing policy
 - b. Consider animal welfare, ethical trading supply chain standards, providing lower carbon footprint options
 - c. Opt for menus that make the most of local, seasonal produce, including:
 - i. vegetarian or vegan options
 - ii. meats which have been produced avoiding antibiotics and hormones
 - iii. avoiding carbon-intensive meats (such as beef and pork)
 - iv. use of Certified Sustainable food (eg: Fairtrade or MSC seafood)
 - d. Food waste –
 - i. avoid over-ordering by asking attendees when they register if they need lunch and getting them to sign up to menu choices in advance
 - ii. keep up to date with the registrations so you can estimate numbers as accurately as possible and keep caterers/suppliers up to date
 - iii. Limit portion sizes

- iv. Ask for tea, coffee and sugar to be in containers – not individually wrapped
- v. Make it easy for attendees to dispose of food waste
- vi. decide how to handle any catering leftovers:
 - 1. such as donating them to a local shelter
 - 2. sending waste to anaerobic digestion facilities
 - 3. coffee grounds recycled to create fuel logs
- e. Reduce other waste –
 - i. Avoid or minimise packaging and try to ban all non-recyclable packaging
 - ii. Eliminate single-use packaging
 - iii. Use re-usable serviceware or fully compostable products
 - iv. instead of buying bottled water, fill jugs with tap water,
 - v. encourage attendees to bring their own reusable water bottles and ensure there are water stations for them to be refilled during the day
 - vi. encourage attendees to bring their own reusable coffee cups and reward their efforts with discounts on their chosen hot drink.
 - vii. bring containers to take away excess food,
 - viii. Use paper straws or ditch straws entirely
 - ix. Look for alternatives to plastic cutlery and plates

5. Hotel/accommodation:

- a. Check for the hotel sustainability policy – are they Eco-Tourism Australia Certified?
- b. Property built from sustainable resources and built using eco-friendly principles (efficient airflow, heating)
- c. Replace single-use toiletry bottles with bulk organic pump dispensers
- d. Use of non-toxic cleaners in housekeeping
- e. Use of renewable energy including low energy lighting
- f. Water efficient toilets and showers
- g. Recycling and composting programs
- h. Organic cottons/linens (sheets, towels, mattresses)
- i. Reusing linens (not replacing every day)
- j. Incorporating in-room recycling
- k. Non-smoking environment
- l. Serves organics and local-grown food
- m. Fresh-air exchange system (or openable windows and doors)
- n. Greywater recycling
- o. Newspaper recycling program
- p. Actively helping the local environment and/or community

6. Materials

- a. Go digital!
 - i. Digitise registration forms,
 - ii. Digital checkin (eg: Eventbrite)
 - iii. share agenda and handouts by email prior to the event,
 - iv. use an app rather than printing the schedule.

- v. Ask any exhibitors to provide digital copies of their brochures to clients via email
- b. If you decide to print, use recycled paper
- c. Re-use any items that still have value
- d. Communicate – ensure all waste/recycling bins are clearly signed and promote best practice
- e. Reskin old, unused banner, rather than making new ones
- f. Opt for a virtual goodie bag – a webpage with links and a QR code is all you need
- g. Freebies can be a significant waste of resource that people never use. Think carefully about “merchandise” – do we need it? Can we provide a green alternative with minimal packaging.
- h. Plastic name badges can be replaced with a recyclable version or reusable badges. Or encourage people to network more and ditch them altogether
- i. Rethink the lanyard – these are often thrown away or stuck in a drawer. Think about more sustainable alternatives (bamboo lanyards with eco-friendly badges). Or ask people to bring their everyday work lanyard or reuse their favourite conference lanyard – a great icebreaker!

Attendees:

- a. Send out a checklist reminding attendees to bring all the essentials –
 - a. reusable cup
 - b. water bottle
 - c. name badge/lanyard
 - d. notebooks and pens
 - e. chargers and adaptors (so they don't have to buy an unnecessary spare)
- b.