



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**AUCKLAND**  
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
NEW ZEALAND

# The University of Auckland Sustainable Events Guide



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As sustainability becomes more and more embedded in our every day practices, event owners and managers across the University can use this guide and the accompanying checklist to support sustainability actions.

Following the principles of the University's Sustainability Policy, this document is based on best practice outlined in *ISO 20121 Standard for Event Sustainability Management Systems* and considers the diversity of events and stakeholders within our University.



# Journey to a sustainable event

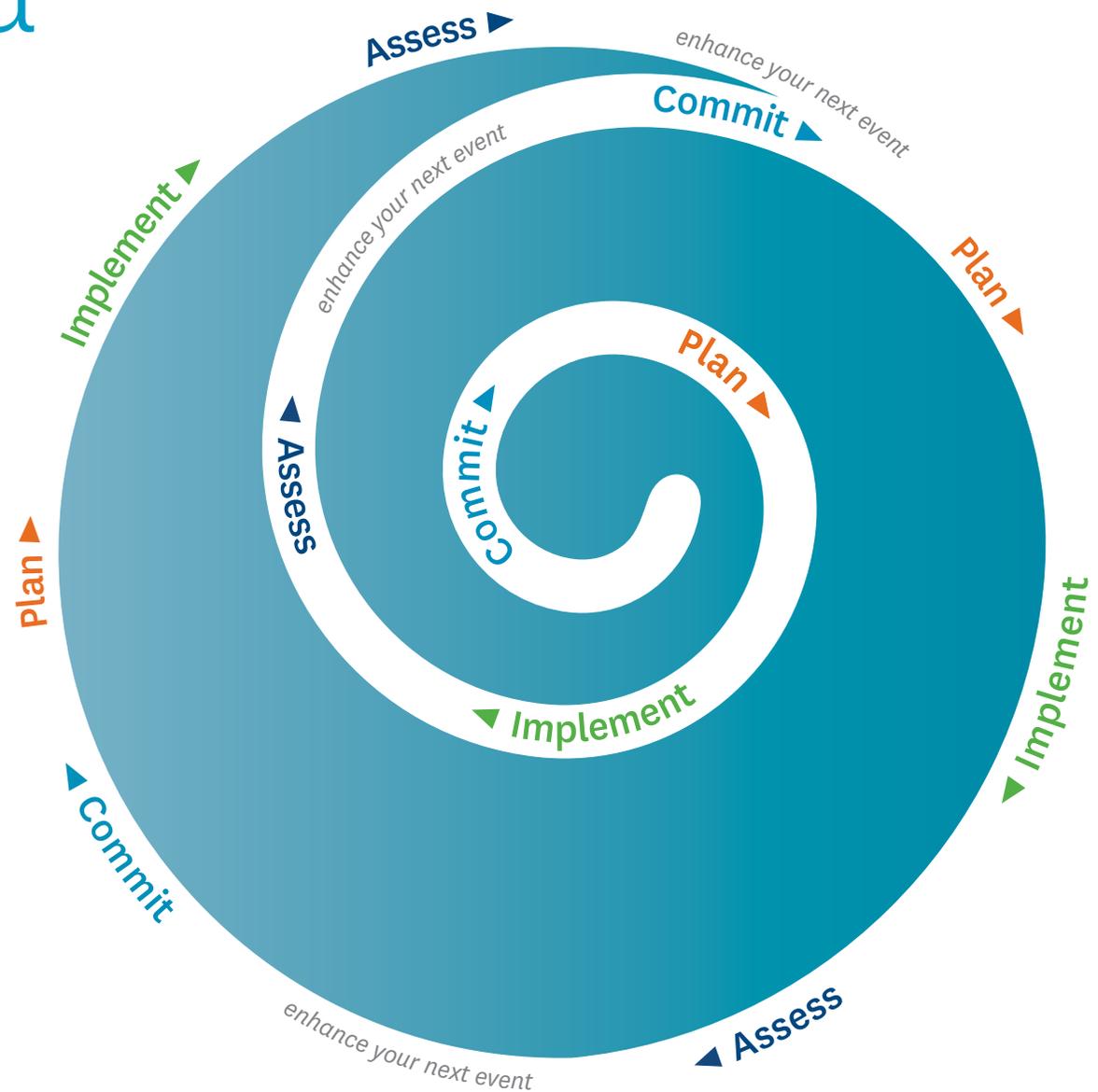
▶ **Commit**

▶ **Plan**

▶ **Implement**

▶ **Assess**

*and enhance  
your next event*





# Commit

Securing commitment from the owners and key event stakeholders is always the first and most important step when we think about sustainability at an event. The University's stakeholders include event owners, managers, event/conference committee members, presenters, speakers. Communicating the existence of the Sustainability Policy and discussing its implementation via a set of actions at a specific event is essential.

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***Make sure you identify the stakeholders early on and get them on board. A committed stakeholder will be more likely to cope with what may be initially perceived as 'sacrifices', in order to achieve best possible sustainability performance.***

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# Plan

## Before you start

Identify any potential issues or contradictions that may arise or are embedded in the event's overall purpose and objectives. Early identification allows time to discuss, change and improve.

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***For example, an event to call for 'world peace' by doing a balloon release to spread out peace messages carries fundamental problems in terms of its environmental outcomes. It is essentially releasing materials that will end up places where they cannot be retrieved and are likely to cause harm to the environment.***

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## Plan well

### Prevent rather than cure

Start thinking about sustainability right from day one, ask questions about the use of resources, the potential generation of waste and how to promote and encourage suitable means of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. Avoid thinking of sustainability as an encapsulated item at the end of a 'to do' list. Instead, apply sustainability principles to every stage of the process including scheduling, floor planning and space design, structure and programme, run sheets, resource allocation, communications, menus.

## Engage

Ensure all people involved in the event are aware of its sustainability principles, make them visible and explicit. This includes staff, attendees, suppliers. Early engagement and clear messages will smoothe the implementation stage.

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***Include relevant sustainability principles when asking for quotes. Suppliers may make an effort to provide the best possible alternatives if involved early on. This will help to avoid difficult, and usually more costly, last minute changes.***

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## Moving away from the ‘single use’ approach

Current dependence on single use packaging and other items has long been proven to be unsustainable. Improving the environmental performance of single use items does not deal with the intrinsic problem of ‘throw away’ mentality. Discouraging single use/ disposable solutions makes way for deeper conversations about long terms solutions to environmental problems and the immediate changes required. Thinking of new ways to understand convenience and practicality around events is a good way to start those conversations.

## Waste free areas

Waste free areas or zones are spaces where there is no provision for disposing of waste or recycling, so no bins. The underlying principle being that people take with them what they have brought in. Events can have designated waste free areas or in some cases be completely waste free by removing or covering all existing bins at the venue.

To establish a waste free area you need to ensure in advance that no items or products which create waste will be provided within the designated space.

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***For example, during a conference, lecture rooms and corridors can be waste free as long as there is nothing given to attendees, such as individually wrapped pens or disposable name tags that require a bin.***

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Designating waste free areas during the planning stage is a great way to critically assess what potential waste streams could result from the event. It provides an opportunity to prevent waste in the first place.



# Implement

There are as many sustainability inspired actions as people in your event ... here are some of the most common ideas for sustainable events:



# Assess

Use post-event surveys and audits to assess the overall sustainability performance of your event and improve future events.

Surveys help to better understand people's experiences and the effectiveness of initiatives. Existing surveys can be adapted to include questions about sustainability. Remember to make the most of event debriefs too!

Audits are also very useful. Particularly when it comes to waste generated at an event. A waste audit involves keeping all waste and recycling from the event separate so that it can be manually sorted and weighed. It is best practice to use a set of pre assigned categories following an established protocol. This provides very useful data on overall quantities and types of materials being discarded. When monitoring a specific event over time, the first waste audit sets the baseline against which subsequent audits are compared. Furthermore, for many people, manually sorting waste brings the problem to the 'here and now', 'in my hands', and opens up opportunities to discuss the origin, magnitude and implications of the mounting waste problem. The Sustainability team can help you with these audits.

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***Waste audits capture only the waste produced during the event and do not take into account the waste generated outside of the event's occurrence. Using invoices or packing slips can also help to understand how well the event has kept to its sustainability principles. These documents will show the quantities of items associated with a particular event and these in turn can be used to analyse the pathway of each item. For single use items for example, we know that 200 disposable cups sooner or later will be 200 disposable cups in landfill and so on.***

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# Questions about sustainability at the University?

Use the knowledge base to ask your question via the Staff Service Centre query box. We are gradually uploading knowledge articles with answers to the most frequently asked questions. If you don't find the answer to your question please contact the Sustainability and Environment team:

**[sustainability@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:sustainability@auckland.ac.nz)**

## Resources and links

- [Sustainability Policy](#)
- [Events Management Policy](#)
- [Event Notification form](#)
- [ISO 20121 Event Sustainability Management Systems International Standard](#)





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