

KEY LEARNINGS ON SUSTAINABILITY

BCD Meetings & Events recently coordinated a series of round table discussions during The Meetings Show 2023 on the topic of sustainability. Industry leaders came together to share their fresh perspectives and ambitions, which have been captured in the following summary.

WHAT HAVE SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES LOOKED LIKE IN 2023?

• Measurement is key

- Organisations are more aware of emissions and are starting to address them by tracking as much data as available.
- Offsetting negative impacts by introducing beneficial initiatives.
- Need to measure success against event/program sustainability goals to support improvement.
- Good quality measurements require consistency. Industry standards have not been officially established, but general standards exist, which suppliers look to adhere to (and often achieve).



BCD M&E Insights:
[How to Set Sustainability KPIs for Your Events Programme](#)

• M&E industry is increasing its ability to reduce excess across events, from carbon footprint to generic waste.

• Increases in accountability at a corporate level.

- Events need to fit within a wider corporate sustainability strategy.
- Internal stakeholders are holding events to account.

• Policy and toolkits helping to guide initiatives.

- Increase in events/businesses producing policy and guidance around sustainability goals.
- Overall, these are intelligent commitments linked to industry standards, often within the **UN sustainability goals' guidelines**.
- Other businesses have created event-specific sustainability toolkits.

- **Success comes information sharing.**

- *Transparent and credible reporting showing positive momentum and key learnings are being used to improve future events.*
- *Increase in sharing best practices post-event, across various channels.*
- *Sharing improvements is helping event professionals to build internal and external cases on how organizations can continue to do more.*

- **Major impact can be achieved through new approaches to travel.**

- *There is a host of apps and tools available to measure delegate travel.*
- *Increase in businesses encouraging car sharing.*
- *In Europe, Eurostar and train travel is being recommended.*
- *Class of travel is a big consideration.*
- *In many cases, the phrasing 'small steps' has been adopted. Small changes in policy and behaviour make a big difference-travel is a major example of this.*

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

- **Delegate involvement is crucial.**

- *Engagement with delegates allows an event to make provisions for the right number of people, reducing waste, energy, etc.*
- *Engagement with delegates allows for better tracking of individual carbon usage (e.g. travel).*
- *Increasingly, events are looking to build engagement at pre-event registration to set expectations at this stage of the delegate journey.*
- *Increased pressure on delegates to participate in the process and equal pressure on events to educate non-engaged delegates/change behaviours.*
- *The same is true for virtual delegations, which still have a carbon footprint that needs to be traced.*
- *Increasingly, events are turning to behavioural economics to drive behaviour change.*

KEY AREAS TO ADDRESS FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE MEETINGS AND EVENTS:

Mindset

- The major barriers are around shifting the mindset of delegates and internal stakeholders.
- Some people still see the change as an inconvenience. Younger generations are more sustainably minded, and leaders from older generations are sometimes seen as blockers.
- Not scaremongering or greenwashing is key. People want to feel comfortable and understand the 'why' behind policies.
- It's important to address competing priorities such as budget/time.
- Approaches vary by country. Many clients have head offices in different territories, with differing approaches to sustainability.

Cost

- More sustainable options are often the most expensive.
- Certain products are expensive to grow, and greenhouses create more carbon emissions (e.g. UK does not produce enough tomatoes for compost; avocados are highly carbon intensive and not possible to grow).

Venues

- Venue and catering supplier selection are both critical in meeting sustainability goals.
- Organisations are expected to possess and pursue sustainability accreditations.
- Buyers will continue asking about what sustainability means to companies.
- People generally want to work with organisations with good credentials and credible evidence on the policies they have in place with venues.
- This is not always a simple or easy conversation. These policies are coming under increasing amounts of scrutiny.
- **Scope 3 is key.**

What are Scope 3 emissions?

Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions stemming from your value chain and logistics. They encompass 15 categories, ranging from employee commuting to operational waste. These emissions are mainly associated with the transport, use, and disposal of products and services your business procures and sells.

Why are people talking about them?

Scope 3 emissions are important because they often make up the largest portion of a company's carbon footprint. Including them is crucial to meet net-zero standards set by initiatives like the Science Based Targets. While challenging to measure due to supply chain complexities, they offer a chance for significant decarbonization and commercial resilience. The numerous types and sources of these emissions can make addressing them daunting, leaving people uncertain about where to begin, which encourages discussion.

Example of Scope 3 emissions in events

When an entity makes a purchasing decision or places a production order for a given item/material, it should include both the embodied carbon and downstream waste generated by that item, within its scope 3 boundary. For example, when an event organiser procures AV/furniture for their event, it should be included in their scope 3 emissions but excluded for the venue, because they are the originator of the event.

Lime Venue Portfolio Counsel recommends:

Not every company has the same level of specialism as BCD M&E and many of its clients. The support a venue can provide is invaluable - they should show their own credible expertise and assist businesses in this area.



Food

Plant-forward approach to menus.

- Increase in events adopting plant-based, seasonal menus as opposed to meat.
- For meat, less carbon-intensive choices are being offered (beef is 500% more carbon-intensive than chicken).

Waste is a continued concern.

- More organisers are pushing back on venues to address food waste.
- Food waste management through portion control is a good solution; many events are considering the shift from buffet to a la carte approach.
- Carbon label of food is a major opportunity to put agency into the hands of delegates.



Lime Venue Portfolio Counsel recommends:

Put more chefs in front of your delegates. They can promote overlooked items, manage portions, provide a theatrical experience, explain menu items, and offer educational insights. Collaborate closely with partners for optimal results.

The way forward

- Carbon offsetting alone is no longer the way forward, it's about complete reduction throughout the entire event lifecycle.
- Scope 3 emissions is a major topic. Using procurement power to positively influence supply chains across the event, but also outside of the traditional event venue.
- More consistency of reporting is needed, a standardised approach would be welcomed.