



Eco-Event Excellence Guide

*Brought to you
by the
Envision Festival
& Upward Spirals*



The Eco-Event Excellence Guide!

Who this is for, and what's inside

This guide is a resource for anyone wanting to improve the environmental impact of their events, festivals, conferences, and retreats. However, the ideas and strategies herein can be applied to almost any project looking to become more sustainable or regenerative.

We decided to produce this guide after a meeting between Envision and Upward Spirals wherein we asked ourselves the question 'How can we combine our strengths to maximize our positive environmental impact in the world?'

Since the first Envision Festival eight years ago, we've grown to include many teams focused on making the event environmentally and socially sustainable and regenerative. We realized that our collective experience producing large festivals, and the lessons from integrating sustainability into every facet of the event, could be a valuable asset for other groups. And the best way to leverage the impact of this resource is to put it into an easy to use and empowering format and share it with others for free.

This way our progress, momentum, and reach can be a catalyst, empowering other events to become more sustainable, to magnify and transform our local actions into global impacts.

The first section discusses the benefits of making events more sustainable and regenerative. This might be useful to help you decide if the benefits are worth the effort, or better communicate with other stakeholders of the importance and opportunity.

Next "Eco-Event Guidelines" shares tips, tactics, and case studies on a range of facets of producing a sustainable event. The first section on Design & Planning includes a variety of strategies and meta considerations that apply in general and to each facet of an event.

In the "Resources" section we have compiled some of the most useful websites which support social enterprises and sustainable businesses, sharing valuable information and tools to make the world a better place.

The final section describes the experience and ethos of the Envision Festival, as well as Upward Spirals' mission, for anyone who would like to know more, share resources, or get involved.

"The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion." - Paulo Coelho

Why make events sustainable?

People everywhere are rapidly becoming aware of the importance of transitioning to more sustainable and regenerative lifestyles and businesses.

As consumers and event goers increasingly consider and value their impact on the planet, conscious businesses who are ready to grow beyond 'business as usual' will increasingly thrive and attract more customers, collaborators, and the support of their local communities.

Whether motivated by self-preservation, environmental ethics, the desire to make the world a better place, or merely wanting one's business to be ready for a radically different future, improving the environmental impact of events benefits everyone.

Event producers who strive for sustainability will mobilize resources and put in place long-ranging policies that are considerate of the environmental burden and resource needs of each department and across the event as a whole. This includes strategies that include and affect every aspect of the event, from location, procurement, budgeting, and staffing, to water, building, energy, food, waste and more. Industry leaders will find ways to allocate and leverage financial and human resources to initiatives that address multiple considerations and engage a range of stakeholders within and outside the organization.

Events can have a significant impact on the local community, who in turn can be a valuable resource in collaboration with event producers. Identifying the needs and concerns of residents, community, and environmental groups are vital for ensuring the support and engagement of all stakeholders.

Integrating sustainable policies and regenerative design across the event leads to the short and long-term thriving of event producers, guests, the local community, local ecosystems, and even the world as we enter increasingly interdependent futures. Regenerative organizations aim to leave things better than they found them, and those who are successful find themselves an integral, appreciated, and supported part of their local ecosystems.

Working towards and achieving audacious goals is inspiring for everyone who participates, and encourages others to see what they're capable of. This type of exemplary leadership is the most authentic, broad-reaching, and effective, as everyone who participates in the event is affected long afterward.

Some goals may take multiple years or more resources than currently available, so remember the advice of Arthur Ashe, "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."

Eco-Event Guidelines

Events bring together so many people and require so many resources that the same principles apply to plan cities and eco-villages, yet additionally require the need for expert timing and procurement to complete everything by the event's start.

The cumulative impact of everyone's individual footprint can be significantly minimized, offset, and through thoughtful design can even be used as a resource.

Event producers can support staff, artists, suppliers, and guests to tread lightly, buy locally, minimize waste, and spread awareness that even small actions, when multiplied by thousands, can have profound effects!

With considerate planning and empowering everyone to participate, producers and participants can have a great time and create a positive impact on the local community and environment. A truly successful event will leave everybody and everything in a better place than before, healthier and in harmony with nature.

The information gathered in each section covers a range of tips, tactics and case studies that Envision and other leading environmental festivals consider when producing events.

*"We are not going in circles; we are going upwards.
The path is a spiral; we have already climbed many steps."
- Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha*

Thanks to [Eric Allen](#), [Manuel Pinto](#), [Jess Bernstein](#), [Davila Photography](#) and Envision Festival for many of the amazing pictures, and a thanks to Dr. Rachel Dodds at [GreenFestivals.ca](#) for sharing their case studies!

Guideline Sections

A decorative floral graphic in light blue, featuring a central stem with leaves and heart-shaped motifs, positioned to the right of the title.

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Design & Planning



Thoughtful design is vital for maximizing the eco-social benefits of events and minimizing environmental impact. Setting goals, making action plans, allocating resources, measuring outcomes, and reporting to stakeholders represent the foundation for producing successful events that protect, conserve, and regenerate natural resources.

Sustainable & Regenerative Event Design Strategies

Strategic Planning

Local conditions, available resources, and the skillsets of the production team should be the main factors in deciding how to make your event more sustainable.

As you plan to improve the sustainability of your event, it may be useful to split ideas into those which are most realistic to implement now and which will be easier to implement later when more resources or experience are available. For harder to reach goals it can be useful to ask 'what resources or conditions would make reaching this goal much easier?'

When applying limited resources to multiple initiatives, it is generally preferable to achieve a few things well rather than spreading resources too thinly at the expense of quality outcomes. Leveraging the successes and lessons from early initiatives is a great way to build momentum towards larger and long-range goals.

Working on sustainability goals can be thought of as a looping process wherein we: Observe and evaluate. Establish goals and objectives. Develop action plans. Assess resource needs and availability. Implement and monitor. Review and refine. Repeat.

Innovate when needed, but only reinvent the wheel when necessary. There has been an enormous amount of work done in the last few decades to create and spread more sustainable and regenerative models for almost any project one can imagine. Searching for examples and solutions before designing from scratch can be time well invested. (For a head-start on this, the 'Resources' section below includes our favorite collections.)

Aim to improve continuously by measuring and reporting the event's progress towards your sustainability goals. Identify what goals were reached and which weren't, and focus on the challenges to accomplishing them now and in the future. Create benchmarks of past performance to inform future goal setting. Create the conditions for your future success.

FACT:

Biomimicry is the practice of observing nature for patterns and flows, and integrating those models into our products, programs, and businesses to be both more sustainable, and to benefit from letting nature do the work.

Business Model Design & Management

Design your business model to be adaptable and resilient to changing environmental and economic conditions. This can be done across departments, by initiatives like diversifying revenue streams, providing programming online, expanding marketing strategies, finding backup venues, and choosing dates and locations less likely to be affected by extreme weather.

Synergize and collaborate with local groups to leverage local strengths, to meet event needs, by creating value for as many people as possible. Build the capacity of the event production team and the local community at any points of mutually-beneficial overlap.

Reinvest profits into long-term cost and resource savings, including prioritizing quality over price in regards to efficiency, life-cycle cost, and the environmental impact of every phase of production, use, and maintenance.

Create incentive systems to recognize and reward actions, teams, contractors, etc. who support and exemplify the sustainability goals and resource efficiency initiatives of the event.

Create a department or director focused on minimizing and improving the events environmental impact. Provide clear roles, responsibilities, and goal descriptions, and specify resources available.

FACT:

In the book 'Regenerative Enterprise: Optimizing for Multi-Capital Abundance', the authors discuss a model for allocating value to eight forms of capital, beyond the three that are most valued in the modern economy. Most organizations focus just on financial, material, and intellectual capital, however, a much more holistic and sustainable model expands to put value on living, social, cultural, spiritual, and experiential capital.



*"Nothing is less productive than to make more efficient what should not be done at all."
- Peter Drucker*



Integrating Sustainable & Regenerative Values

Consider how the healthfulness of an event supports or diminishes the health of participants and the environment. This is found at all levels of the event from offering food options which could be fresh, local, organic, seasonal, non-GMO, to air quality, waste management, employment contracts, local economic integration and more.

Identify the areas where organizational activities are out of alignment with environmental and social values, and dedicate resources to closing the gap. Practice using those values as filters for future organizational initiatives and budget allocations.

Ask 'sustain what'? When designing how to make something as sustainable or minimally impactful as possible, it's frequently useful to reflect on if the thing should be done at all. For instance, sustainable printing initiatives lead to recycled paper with water-based inks produced on efficient renewable energy powered printers. But asking 'sustain what?' leads to a digital ticket. On a more macro level, consider if your goal is to be sustainable or regenerative?

Share your successful examples with others; it's one of the most effective ways to accelerate a regenerative future!



Procurement

Prioritizing a sustainable supply chain is one of the best ways event producers can not only reduce their environmental impact but even tip beyond sustainability to regeneration. Going way beyond just reducing waste and using resources efficiently, an organization's opportunity to create and support a responsible supply chain can have profound impacts on the local community and environment.

Efforts to make procurement more sustainable and efficient can benefit all facets of the event, and the examples and empowerment can impact event participants, staff and vendors long after the event.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Policies

- ◆ Consider the life-cycle cost, embodied energy, and quality/durability of materials used in building, energy production, and operations
- ◆ Consider externalities that might disguise the true cost of apparently cheap options
- ◆ Designate a team member to research the cost-benefit of using the most environmentally appropriate products
- ◆ Encourage participation in the research of eco-alternatives
- ◆ Research product ingredients and their environmental impacts to identify less harmful alternatives
- ◆ Offer incentives to suppliers who can exceed your sustainability standards, and to those who help you reduce the amount of goods and services demanded over time
- ◆ Integrate supplier's feedback on ways to improve the impact of materials and processes

Suppliers

- ◆ Prioritize collaboration with suppliers with established environmental and corporate responsibility guidelines, and inform them about your environmental and social sustainability policies
- ◆ Buy local whenever possible, and be willing to vote with your budget priorities when considering that local options might have a higher purchase price
- ◆ Reduce shipping and handling charges by managing inventory amounts and timing efficiently
- ◆ Improve transportation efficiency by combining orders to fill delivery vehicles
- ◆ Collaborate with local businesses to buy in bulk
- ◆ Request that suppliers use energy-efficient equipment powered by renewable sources



Products

- ◆ Prioritize purchase of locally sourced reused, reusable, compostable, recyclable and recycled products and materials
- ◆ Buy fresh, organic, seasonal, local, and Fairtrade
- ◆ Use biodegradable, eco-friendly toiletries, soaps, detergents, and cleaning products
- ◆ Purchase energy-efficient equipment and LED light bulbs
- ◆ Building materials are frequently toxic, so seek benign alternatives or the least toxic options available (like non-VOC and low-VOC paints)
- ◆ Look for locally-sourced timber with FSC-certification when building with wood
- ◆ If using products containing paper, ensure they are FSC-certified or made from recovered materials
- ◆ Consider using cloths instead of paper-based products

Waste Reduction

- ◆ Purchase in bulk
- ◆ Avoid single-use products
- ◆ Use reusable containers to reduce packaging
- ◆ Avoid packaging, especially non-recyclable
- ◆ Minimize petroleum-based plastics
- ◆ Request that suppliers retake packaging

FACTS:

“By managing and improving environmental, social and economic performance throughout supply chains, companies can conserve resources, optimize processes, uncover product innovations, save costs, increase productivity and promote corporate values.” - GreenBiz

One method to build a sustainable supply chain outlined by Elizabeth Ichniowski suggests this process: Define organizational objectives. Create meaningful objectives. Select suppliers and agree to targets. Evaluate and develop suppliers. Build on past successes.

Case Studies

Procurement Systems and Processes

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

In 2017, the Envision Festival was growing rapidly and needed to improve the efficiency of the procurement systems used to gather the resources required to produce the 6,000 person event in the Costa Rican jungle.

As the festival grew in popularity the environmental impact and potential cost savings of improving how the festival sourced its food, building materials, and supplies for vendors and artists were becoming evident. Festival management worked with organizational development consultants at Upward Spirals to design a new set of systems and processes to improve financial performance and minimize environmental impact.

By coordinating procurement across all departments, the new system facilitated bulk purchasing, decreased costs and unnecessary purchases, reduced transportation, and provided resource use metrics that event management could use to set future financial targets or plan efficiency improvements.



FACTS:

Supply chain choices are an excellent opportunity to support local business, marginalized groups, small businesses, and organizations that integrate ecological and Fairtrade standards.

“The most sustainable way to procure is not to buy at all or to keep demand to a minimum by operating the business more efficiently” - CIPS

Green Purchasing

Rothbury Festival, United States

The festival developed a policy for sustainable materials replacing disposable items with compostable options made from plants instead, like plates made from sugarcane, and cups, straws and trash bags made of corn. They also offer organic clothing for sale, use recycle waste oil as biodiesel, and provide recycled toilet paper.

Environmental & Ethical Statement

Cambridge Folk Festival, UK

All caterers and traders complete an Environmental and Ethical Statement as part of the process to secure a stall, which is taken into account, when deciding who should trade on site. Catering outlets must use biodegradable trays, cups, and lids as well as wooden cutlery rather than plastic. All tea, coffee and hot chocolate sold on site are Fairtrade, and all egg products are free-range. Caterers are not allowed to use generators, which can add to emissions, noise, and pollution. The festival provides caterers with containers so they can recycle food waste, water, and cooking oil and prevent contamination of local land or waterways. Traders are not allowed to provide plastic bags to customers. Reusable cloth bags are available for sale.





Community & Local Economy Integration

Events offer many opportunities to support the local community and businesses. By prioritizing local producers, artists, community groups, environmental organizations, and employing locals, event producers can create many great benefits for the region.

By sharing the event's sustainability policies, and working with a local supply chain who have made similar commitments to environmental standards, the event's beneficial impact can be further magnified.

Getting involved in local associations, including community representatives in big decisions, and seeking to create win-win-win (event, community, and environment) agreements are all great ways to integrate with the local community and ensure long-term support.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Supporting the Local Economy

- ◆ Buy local whenever possible, and create alliances with local nonprofits and community groups
- ◆ Showcase local artists work and allow local vendors and craftspeople to sell or promote their products
- ◆ Consider how the event impacts the local community and environment, and design initiatives to address any challenges
- ◆ Coordinate and/or sponsor local sustainability-focused events like planting gardens, cleaning beaches, reforestation, etc.
- ◆ Join local associations related to the marketing or networking of regional sustainable tourism and locally produced products
- ◆ Share your sustainability policies with local community groups and find ways to improve environmental awareness in the community
- ◆ Find out if other businesses in your area would be interested in a shared renewable energy installation, a bulk buying agreement, or in using your food wastes as compost



PERSPECTIVES:

“All living systems are networks of smaller components, and the web of life as a whole is a multi-layered structure of living systems nestling within other living systems – networks within networks.” - Fritjof Capra in “The Web of Life”

“It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sharing Your Microphone

- ◆ Promote the local culture, and inform attendees about local stores and lodging
- ◆ Invite local First Nation representatives to promote their heritage and culture
- ◆ Collaborate with local partners to encourage visitors to explore the local area
- ◆ Create a stand in the venue for the communication of your event’s sustainability initiatives and how they benefit the local community
- ◆ Promote local environmental and community organizations

Giving Back

- ◆ Offer reduced rates for locals or sliding scale ticket prices
- ◆ Offer a need-based scholarship program
- ◆ Invite attendees to donate unwanted items to local charities
- ◆ Offer local charities and environmental groups space to setup educational booths or places to receive donations

“If you want to be incrementally better; be competitive. If you want to be exponentially better; be cooperative.” - Unknown

Case Studies

Regenerating Lands

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

In partnership with the Costas Verdes beach and forest restoration project, Envision donated a portion of each purchase to sponsor over 45,000 trees planted in Costa Rica.

Costas Verdes has a three element approach to their work; using 100% native trees, to restore the local Costa Rican ecosystem.

Bringing back the animals (squirrels, turtles, monkey, and macaws have already begun heading back to the beach), is a vital element of this principle. The trees planted and that have matured over the years have brought shade, to bring down the temperature of sand that is crucial for turtle life cycles and comfort among residents.

Secondly is the social impact involved. "From the community to the community." Bringing schools and children (private and public) to plant trees, some students even four years in a row has had a lasting effect on the community. Starting to understand how life comes out of nowhere and watching the trees grow into a coastal jungle, is a huge part of student's education and observation that sticks with them. The students then go back to their houses and being to educate their household members, creating a ripple impact.

Lastly, the economic impact involved helps tourist and visitors enjoy themselves on the beaches that they love. The exposure to the reforestation is high, and it creates a trust from the community to be able to see the project transform. The tools are provided for volunteers to come and plant trees, provide maintenance throughout the projects and for acknowledgment that this project is for them.

One of Costas Verdes reforestation projects on the Pacific coast



Reforestation

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

In another initiative to regenerate the local environment, Envision partnered with Community Carbon Trees to plant trees in essential areas to create biological corridors and economic opportunities for people living on the edge of critical deforestation areas.

Here is a message from Founder and President, Jennifer Smith:

“If we are truly to create lasting solutions to the environmental problems facing the planet, we have to do MORE than plant trees for global warming... Ideally, we also have to find ways to preserve local communities and cultures, while immediately rebuilding deforested soils, wildlife corridors and protecting watersheds and old growth forests. This work is especially important in countries like Costa Rica where there still exist entire stretches of primary jungle along the coast which, in turn, influence the oceans and marine life, together so vital to the overall stability of our global climate.”

Conservation Booths

Windfall Ecology Festival, Canada

A series of stands are set up at the festival and are staffed by various local environmental associations including a conservation authority, a naturalist group, and a university environment program, all providing information to the community.

Eco Option Ticket

Island Vibe, Australia

Ticket purchasers are invited to invest in the eco option where an additional fee of \$3.20 goes towards reducing Island Vibe’s environmental impact in a way that the festival goer decides. It could be planting native trees, investing in renewable solar energy, or funding companies to install efficient light bulbs in local houses.





Staff & Guest Engagement

Empowering everyone to participate in the sustainability goals of the event is the best way to effectively spread the responsibilities and leverage the collective capacities of the group. Efforts to educate and include lead to increased buy-in across the event team and encourage people to get more personally involved.

Creating an organizational culture that values participation and empowerment towards shared environmental goals is a powerful force within the event which impacts everyone involved. Once staff, vendors, and attendees are exposed to empowering ideas and actionable plans, they become agents of change in their communities long after the event.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Management & Training

- ◆ Lead by example
- ◆ Create a department or director focused on engaging as many staff and guests as possible in the sustainability goals of the event and delegating responsibilities and resources
- ◆ Ensure all staff are aware of and engaged in your sustainability policies and activities, and have access to details on procedures for reducing/recycling, energy use, equipment use and maintenance, transportation, etc.
- ◆ Monitor progress and provide ongoing support and training in resource efficiency
- ◆ Provide time off for professional development opportunities such as sustainable tourism and environmental management conferences
- ◆ Discuss progress towards sustainability goals at board of directors meetings
- ◆ Establish methods of formal recognition for responsible decision-making
- ◆ Share monthly or quarterly progress reports towards eco-social goals

FACT:

Sociocracy 3.0 is sometimes referred to as Dynamic Governance; a set of tools which facilitates group decision making and communication within an organization or community group. Liberating Structures 'quickly foster lively participation in groups to include and unleash everyone,' through a set of 33 simple models to enable and enhance collaboration. Both tools are linked in the 'Resources' section.

*“None of us is smarter
than all of us”
- Ken Blanchard*



HR Policies & Staff Empowerment

- ◆ Consider equal opportunity or other social justice focused HR policies
- ◆ Involve staff in sustainability policies and encourage them to share their ideas on how to create a more sustainable event
- ◆ Use local workers and volunteers as much as possible, and when possible make positions year-round
- ◆ Establish awards for staff doing excellent work towards the event's green goals
- ◆ Provide time off, or coordinate days, for staff wishing to take part in impactful local community or environmental initiatives
- ◆ Create a recognition program and offer rewards for staff who participate in community or environmental benefit projects
- ◆ Provide incentives for staff to bike, walk, carpool, or take public transportation
- ◆ Educate staff about public transportation as well as local forums and other platforms for sustainable transportation
- ◆ Encourage staff to bring reusable cups and plates and provide them to anyone without

Guest Engagement

- ◆ Seek feedback from guests on your sustainability initiatives and policies
- ◆ Invite guests to fund local environmental conservation initiatives
- ◆ Create competitions and rewards for guests to share their best event sustainability ideas
- ◆ Educational signs throughout the venue can educate and encourage environmental practices like recycling, reusing, composting, and conserving energy
- ◆ Organize booths with information to educate guests about energy use, recycling, transportation options, sustainable accommodations, waste management, and water conservation
- ◆ Provide demonstrations and signage on how to manage waste and gray water
- ◆ Prohibit single-use containers and encourage guests to bring their own reusable bottles (and provide reusables for sale or rent)
- ◆ Offer guests options for minimizing and offsetting the carbon impact of their participation in the event
- ◆ Tell guests to encourage other festivals to adopt sustainability goals



Case Studies

Greener Trader Award

The Falls Music and Arts Festival, Australia

Greener Trader Award – All traders must use biodegradable utensils and source local products wherever possible. All scraps are composted. Left over food is donated to charity. The most innovative trader wins an award each year and is promoted on site.



Environmental Coordinator

Cambridge Folk Festival, UK

There is a dedicated environmental coordinator who advises and oversees all environmental initiatives. The festival also ran a highly successful award for caterers and traders looking at all aspects of their environmental impact including transport, energy, waste, and purchasing ethics.



Programming & Activities

The activities and entertainment provide an excellent opportunity to promote your commitment to sustainability and the local community. Local artists that share your values can be provided with a platform to spread great eco-social ideas, workshops can provide people with valuable educational experiences, and fun activities which bring the community together can engage both children and adults in caring for the environment.

The experience and education create a lasting impression which can have ripple effects long after the event.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Installations & Infrastructure

- ◆ Set up demonstration gardens and permaculture projects for attendees to learn about growing organic food, using natural building materials, and using renewable energy
- ◆ Showcase artwork all around the site made from natural, recycled, or reused materials
- ◆ Set up a demonstration campsite highlighting eco-friendly choices in materials and processes
- ◆ Place signs on interesting and important features in the local ecosystem like plant species, ecological function, or medicinal properties
- ◆ Designate an area for regeneration where guests can plant native trees, bee-friendly plants, create shelters for insects or birds, and learn about native flora and fauna
- ◆ On compost toilets or water saving fixtures, place educational information about the amount of water saved per year through these systems

Workshops & Activities

- ◆ Invite local environmental and social benefit organizations to set up booths to educate attendees and recruit new helpers to their projects
- ◆ Offer workshops teaching easy, affordable, do-it-yourself skills and ways attendees can live a more sustainable and regenerative lifestyle
- ◆ Organize excursions to local organic farms or sustainable projects and encourage guests to get involved
- ◆ Hire local artists, musicians, dance acts
- ◆ Match activities to light needs and plan to maximize use of natural daylighting
- ◆ Plan beach cleanup, invasive species removal, or other environmental regenerative project
- ◆ Encourage artists to highlight sustainability issues and solutions in their work

Some Systemically Impactful & Personally Actionable Topics

- ◆ Permaculture, organic agriculture, food forestry
- ◆ Renewable energy
- ◆ Natural building
- ◆ Healthful eating
- ◆ Yoga, meditation, and other wellness practices
- ◆ Medicinal plants
- ◆ Living in community
- ◆ Collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution
- ◆ Group process facilitation and organizing
- ◆ Sustainable development
- ◆ Ecovillages
- ◆ Resource efficiency, and using wastes as resources
- ◆ Global environmental issues and solutions
- ◆ Ecological mutualism and biomimicry
- ◆ Solutions activism
- ◆ Regenerative economics / Ecological economics
- ◆ Creating sustainable and regenerative livelihoods
- ◆ Social enterprise and community wealth building



FACTS:

Most people learn better and remember more through experiential education than lectures.

Providing workshop attendees with digital copies of presentation materials is a great way to encourage engagement and follow-through after the event company is already in the area.

“The question of reaching sustainability is not whether we will have enough energy, enough food, enough tangible resources, those the Earth can provide. The question is: will there be enough leaders in time?”

*- Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt,
Founder of The Natural Step*

Case Studies

Sustainability Education

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

The lineup of the 2018 Envision Festival featured dozens of workshops, classes, and presentations on a range of environmental, social justice, wellness, and movement topics. Each stage has a slightly different focus, showcasing local and global experts, educators, and leaders. Sessions start early and go all day, ramping into music and arts throughout the evening. Estimates are that about half the attendees come specifically for the educational opportunities at the festival.



Environmental DIY Workshops

Lightning in a Bottle, United States

The festival's environmental lineup of workshops focuses on easy, low cost, do-it-yourself (DIY) ways that people can lower resource use and learn to grow their own food and make their own resources.





Location & Venue

When planning a sustainable event, location is one of the most critical factors. The facilities, waste and water management systems, and environmental policies of the selected venue will have a significant impact on how sustainable the event can be.

Since large events can significantly impact the local community and environment, consider how to complement and benefit the local bioregion. Look to create win-win-wins by creating jobs, sharing volunteer hours with local projects, planning thoughtfully for water and waste, and purchasing locally.

Assess local environmental and wildlife issues since every location has a different set of flora and fauna that may need to be protected from the event's impact. Working with local community and environmental groups can inform priorities, and is a great way to make friends and allies for projects in and around the event.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Policy

- ◆ Select a venue that has a stated environmental policy, and ask about any certifications, awards, and formal procedures used to be more sustainable
- ◆ Hire a management team that is supportive of the venue's environmental efforts
- ◆ Have a director or department focused on a.) Minimizing and mitigating the events environmental impact and b.) Creating positive environmental or social outcomes
- ◆ Establish incentive systems to recognize and reward actions, teams, contractors, etc. who support the event in becoming excellent in sustainability
- ◆ Work with rental companies that use renewable materials and have sustainability policies
- ◆ Include environmental standards in contracts vendors and staff



Location

- ◆ Distribute a Request for Proposal to several venues well in advance to consider not just best pricing and terms but also environmental impact and sustainability policies
- ◆ Consider access to public transport, stores and lodging
- ◆ Be thoughtful to the normal use of the areas surrounding the event, and plan for parking, traffic, and road access

Infrastructure & Energy

- ◆ Identify venues that use renewable energy to power systems that are efficient with heating, cooling, lighting, and water
- ◆ Use ground-floor venues to avoid the need for elevators
- ◆ Selecting a venue well matched to the expected attendance saves costs for excess heating, cooling and lighting
- ◆ Venues with their own equipment can reduce the need for transporting sound, lighting, stages, etc.
- ◆ Choose venues with ample natural light, or when not possible look for energy saving LEDs
- ◆ If heating or cooling is required at the venue, set thermostat as low as reasonable

Impact

- ◆ Design initiatives that benefit local residents and businesses
- ◆ Collaborate with local environmental and groups to avoid impacts to local flora and fauna, especially around camping and any sensitive areas
- ◆ Consider conducting an environmental impact assessment of the event
- ◆ Work with the local community to mitigate noise issues and raise awareness of efforts
- ◆ Consider how the event can not only 'Leave no Trace' but even become a regenerative force in the area

FACTS:

One of the most critical factors in designing for the long-term sustainability of a location is the ability to produce the event there year after year. This allows for cost-effective investment into more sustainable building choices, energy production options, and other improvements that reduce long-term costs and lower environmental impact.

Venue location and infrastructure can be a primary contributor to an event's environmental impact. Easy access to public transportation, energy efficient and renewably powered event infrastructure, and excellent waste management are useful to consider when choosing between venues.

Case Studies

Making Alliances with Conservation Projects

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

Rancho La Merced is a National Wildlife Refuge that consists of 506 hectares of primary and secondary tropical wet forest, as well as pastures, mangroves next to the Morete River, and adjacent to the beach and the Pacific Ocean beyond. Exotic birds, reptiles, insects, and mammals abound.

Rancho La Merced has been protected from hunting for many years, and it is an active member of the Asociacion de Amigos de la Naturaleza del Pacífico Central y Su (ASANA). El Rancho is part of the Tapirs Path Wildlife Corridor. It was recently awarded with the Bandera Azul Ecológica and the Certificación de Sostenibilidad Turística (CST) from the Costa Rican Tourism Bureau. The management of Rancho La Merced is very much in concurrence with Envision's beliefs about the importance of permaculture and community.

The Envision Festival has a multi-year lease with Rancho La Merced which has allowed the festival to invest in event infrastructure which can be used year after year and reduces the time and cost of building and tearing down each year. Similarly, reforestation efforts, planting gardens, and sourcing more food from the land became viable from the multi-year agreement.



Impact Assessment

Rocking the Daisies, South Africa

An external environmental impact assessment was performed at the festival site, enabling producers to protect sensitive areas during the event.

Recycled/Reclaimed Stages

Basscoast Festival, Canada

Almost everything used at the Basscoast festival in British Columbia, including the stages, are built from re-claimed, reused, and recycled materials.



Communicating Sustainability

This section outlines ways to ensure the sustainability goals of the event are clear and understood by staff, guests and the local community.

Reflecting on options to reduce environmental harm and increase eco-social benefits is an excellent way to create win-win-win agreements that benefit the event, local community, and the environment. Writing and spreading a set of goals and policies can provide a supportive and inclusive way for everyone to be a part of making the event as sustainable as possible.

“How” something is communicated can be just as important as “what” is being said, so consider how you want event staff, guests, and locals to engage with your goals to find the best ways to communicate them.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Goals & Policies

- ◆ Create a mission and vision for the sustainability of the event which expresses commitments to minimize environmental impacts, contribute to the local economy, and to treat all staff fairly
- ◆ Include the staff and local community in creating the events sustainability goals to benefit from diverse perspectives and maximize engagement
- ◆ Create a clear set of environmental policies which is easily visible and updated regularly
- ◆ Outline specific sustainability goals, devise a strategy for achieving each goal, assess the resources required to achieve the goals, document and report on progress
- ◆ Provide training and educational materials to all staff and vendors
- ◆ Integrate sustainability policies into vendor contracts
- ◆ Start planning for sustainability initiatives early in the production cycle to ensure sufficient time to integrate improvements at each stage
- ◆ Offer incentives to staff and vendors who help the event production be as sustainable as possible
- ◆ Aim to win sustainability awards and publicize any awards to guests

FACTS:

A Greener Festival survey found that 43% of fans said that they had changed their behavior as a result of green initiatives or ideas they had discovered at festivals.

Remember that listening is the most important part of communicating!

Information & Communication

- ◆ Make the sustainability related mission, vision, goals, and policies available online to event participants and the local community
- ◆ Demonstrate your dedication to sustainability on promotional materials like brochures, newsletters, and websites
- ◆ Put up notices with sustainability facts and venue/staff achievements at key sites
- ◆ Share reports internally and with local community about progress and challenges on achieving sustainability goals
- ◆ Provide information on site and on your website about local sustainable tourism initiatives
- ◆ Use terms that are commonly understood, and clearly define any new or unusual concepts



Waste Reduction

- ◆ Reduce paper waste by emailing promotional material, newsletters and info packets
- ◆ Educate attendees, vendors, and staff on appropriate waste management
- ◆ Use whiteboards instead of flipcharts, and send digital pictures of the content to participants to reduce note-taking wastes
- ◆ Provide digital copies of presentation materials and info packets for workshops and staff training

Case Studies

Permaculture Action Day

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

A Permaculture Action Day was held the day before the Festival in the nearby town of Uvita, mobilizing the Festival community to take tangible action to help the local area. Three projects at two local schools and an extracurricular education center were completed, with activities including mural painting, planting gardens and fruit trees, and musical activities with the students. Eco Team education of participants from the box office line, to campgrounds, and at individual bin stations. Educational necessities are continually evolving. Several workshops and lectures with a dominant focus on permaculture and environmental consciousness. Eco Hub space in The Village, adjoining the Network Center. This is the headquarters of the Eco Team, as well as an information booth for all things environmentally and permaculturally related at Envision Festival and within the community, and also a place to share ideas about all things environmentally oriented.



Post Event Educational Tour

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

In 2019, the Envision Festival is partnering with a local sustainability education program to offer the Sustainable Living Expedition to festival goers looking to continue their education and experience after the event. By promoting the educational opportunity through the festivals marketing channels, more awareness was brought to impactful education projects, and over a dozen local organizations involved in the Expedition were supported through the marketing alliance.

The themes during the educational tour complement the mission of the festival and offer practical and hands-on opportunities to extend the principles of the event back into attendees lives. Here's a link to this year's itinerary: <https://upwardspirals.net/envision-sle-itinerary/> , covering topics like organic food, natural building, renewable energy, and sustainable business.

Educational Activities & Prizes

Celebrate Barrie, Canada

This community festival used activities and prizes to promote environmental initiatives and encourage participation. There were Frisbees made out of recycled plastic, dog leashes made out of old water bottles, lunch boxes created from recycled materials, as well as compost and recycling guides.

Nature Committee

Vancouver Folk Music Festival, Canada

In addition to removing debris (and sometimes people!) from the sensitive riparian habitat at Jericho Beach Park, the Nature Committee also educates Festival goers on the importance of eco-systems and marine protected areas.

Volunteer Promotional Stall

Cambridge Folk Festival, UK

Cambridge Folk Festival partners with Cambridge Friends of the Earth, who provide a team of volunteers who run a promotional stall to educate attendees on the benefits of recycling and to promote a variety of other environmental issues.





Marketing & Promotions

For most large events, marketing is both one of the most substantial expenses and largest revenue generators. Communications are an opportunity to share the ethos and brand identity of your event with potential attendees, in ways which not only maximize conversion but also educate and empower. Planning a range of communications for months before an event is a common event promotion strategy, into which you can integrate communications which help you achieve your sustainability goals.

Aligning marketing methods and materials with how they are communicated is an authentic way to demonstrate your organizational values and leadership in producing a sustainable event.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Policies & Communications

- ◆ Consider marketing an opportunity to promote environmental and social values
- ◆ Highlight how the event and its production benefit society or the environment (e.g., buying Fairtrade or organic, being 'zero-waste', providing opportunities to disadvantaged producers, etc.)
- ◆ Communicate environmental policies and practices to event participants to encourage efficient resource use, and material reuse and recycling
- ◆ Encourage guests to use sustainable accommodations within walking/biking distance, and inform about ridesharing options
- ◆ Donate a percentage of revenue to local environmental or community groups and publicize the support on promotional materials
- ◆ Count a percentage of time spent by staff on local projects towards their employment contract with the event
- ◆ Create a set of policies around minimizing impact from promotions, and share them with staff, artists and vendors
- ◆ Provide as much detail as possible about the sustainability of supply chains, and all products and services
- ◆ Consider designing marketing communications to appeal to values instead of utilizing techniques which appeal to fear or sense of scarcity
- ◆ Consider matching the stated benefits of participating in the event to actual results rather than overselling



Suppliers & Partners

- ◆ Make co-promotion alliances with local organizations as affiliate promoters
- ◆ Create and maintain long-term relationships with venues, partners, sponsors, and vendors
- ◆ Invite influential sustainability focused authors, speakers, actionists, and facilitators to present or organize workshops and publicize their participation with the event
- ◆ Share your microphone with educators and community organizers
- ◆ Communicate with suppliers and partners about ways they could support the event to be more sustainable, and reasons why you hope or expect they will
- ◆ Create newsworthy benefit to the local environment or community groups and invite local newspapers to write about the project
- ◆ Organize a community event and educate participants on ways they can benefit from and be a part of the festival

FACTS:

Double sided printing not only halves paper use but additionally reduces energy consumption by about 25%.

When printing is necessary, you can minimize impacts by:

- Printing the least number possible
- On the smallest sized recycled paper
- Using black and white water-based ink
- Double-sided, single-spaced, wide-margins
- On energy-efficient printers
- Powered by renewable energy
- Using reusable templates
- Promoting sustainable values
- Planned early to ensure suppliers have time to meet printing guidelines
- Delivered on-site whenever the printing company is already in the area





Materials & Reduction

- ◆ Use mobile apps or web pages to share venue information, transportation maps and times, and program itinerary
- ◆ Use online ticketing and biodegradable wristbands
- ◆ Use online survey platforms instead of paper forms to reduce waste and time spent processing feedback
- ◆ Create banners for reuse over many events
- ◆ When designing large banners, consider printing dates on a smaller affixable flyer to enable reuse of as much material as possible
- ◆ Purchase reusable identity badges and lanyards and collect them after the event
- ◆ Analyze data from previous or similar events to enable more accurate estimates of materials and printing needs



Transportation

The guidelines outlined here address policies, incentives, and education initiatives that collectively contribute to minimizing the environmental impact of transportation to events.

Most of the impact of the transportation choices made for your event may be made by the guests, staff, and artists. Empowering everyone through information about the options available, facilitating carpooling/ridesharing, offering shuttles, free bike storage, and other incentives can make it easier for everyone to participate in the event's sustainable transportation goals.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Design & Infrastructure

- ◆ Consider creating an impact assessment of transport to and from the venue, and establishing peak flows predictions aiming to stagger arrivals to minimize impact
- ◆ Choose a venue location that reduces the distance participants travel (ideally easily reachable by bike or public transport)
- ◆ Charge for parking, reinvest proceeds in sustainable transport awareness and incentives
- ◆ Incentivize the use of environmentally-friendly transport to and from the festival by offering prizes like VIP upgrades, or priority passes, or other discounts
- ◆ Organize shuttle services to and from the event, ideally powered by hybrid, electric or biodiesel vehicles
- ◆ Make sure there is ample and secure bike racks at the venue
- ◆ Use renewably-powered and energy-efficient vehicles on-site (such as electric or biodiesel)

Communication & Infrastructure

- ◆ Encourage arrival by public transport or by bike by providing maps and information on the best routes and rental and storage locations
- ◆ Showcase local walking and cycling routes, events and tours in the local area
- ◆ Set up an online forum to enable those that wish to arrive by car to carpool, and use it to promote use of public transportation and cycling
- ◆ Discourage engine-idling at the venue upon arrival/exit
- ◆ Create a training program to educate guests and staff on sustainable travel options



FACTS:

Measuring and listing all transportation energy needs by amount helps determine where energy efficiency and savings efforts can yield the greatest benefits.

Many events find their largest source of related emissions comes from how participants travel to the site. Offering ideas, support, incentives, education, and sustainable travel options for event guests can be one of the largest potential areas for minimizing environmental impact.

Reducing the impact of total transportation needed should be the first consideration, and afterward, programs to offset carbon emissions can help further reduce environmental impact.

The Splore Festival achieved a 25% reduction in the number of vehicles on site by introducing the Parking Pass, which rewards carpooling and provides funds for affordable alternative travel.

When Bonnaroo introduced its rideshare program, 825 pounds of CO₂ were prevented by saving 44,500 vehicle miles. 397 rides were requested, and 726 were offered, connecting festival-goers and significantly reducing single occupancy vehicles.

Case Studies

Getting to the Event

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

The idea is to limit car trips. Most people camp on site during the Festival, thus eliminating daily car trips and associated emissions. Over 600 people took the Envision Shuttles to and from the airport, and the festival site is on a major public bus line. A materials storage bodega was built on the site, thus eliminating emissions and materials that would have been generated and required for transporting heavy reusable items to an offsite storage location. We invite dozens of local restaurants to serve food on-site further reducing participant's needs to leave the grounds.

Our most substantial emissions impact comes from the transportation of people traveling from international locations. Our remote location is crucial to the spirit and intention of the gathering, as is our support for Costa Rica's ecotourism, so it is in this category that continual improvement is most crucial.

Association Community Carbon Trees Costa Rica (ACCT) is our carbon offsetting nonprofit organization of choice. ACCT nurtures a highly diverse selection of rare native tropical trees in their nurseries and then transports, plants, and maintains them in a natural forest matrix until maturity. By planting and preserving trees with funds raised at Envision, ACCT directly helps Envision offset part of our transportation footprint. It is estimated that planting and bringing to maturity one equatorial tree (at the cost of ~\$25) offsets an equivalent volume of CO₂ generated by an international flight.



Secure Bike Valet Parking

Windfall Ecology Festival, Canada

In 2015, the Windfall Ecology Festival had a secure, locked up bike area that festival visitors could leave their bikes at for free. The initiative was promoted on the website and obvious when attending the festival. This was a great way to encourage people to bike to the festival and reduce the impact caused by transportation to and from the festival.

Carpool Contest

Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, United States

A carpool contest makes people who arrive in a vehicle with four or more people eligible for prizes:

First place is VIP upgrade for everyone in the car

Second place is two meal vendor tokens for each passenger in the car

Third place is a Bonnaroo merchandise item for each passenger in the car

Shuttle Transport

Mariposa Folk Festival, Orillia

Mariposa Folk Festival encourages sustainable transport. One way they do this is by providing a free shuttle bus. The shuttle bus schedule is easily accessible on the festival website and gives festival-goers many options to get the festival while leaving their cars at home.

Travel Carbon Fund

Shambala Festival, UK

Our 'Travel Carbon Fund' is made up of donations from car and camper pass buyers who choose to make a small donation when buying tickets. The rationale is that the festival must accept that attendees are making the journey to and from the festival and that we can do something positive to account for it. The fund invests in a carbon-free future through wind energy projects.





Water



This section provides guidelines on how to conserve water, avoid contamination, and reduce the energy associated with providing drinking water and treating wastewater. As a precious resource with limited supply, water should be conserved as much as possible which means careful consideration over its source, availability, and use. Whenever possible utilizing local water infrastructure and treating wastewater on-site will save on transport-associated impacts (such as storage and energy use).

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Provision & Policies

- ◆ Ensure ample-free drinking water is available onsite, ideally from local water sources
- ◆ Prohibit the on-site sale of single-use plastic water bottles and promote the use of reusable mugs and water bottles
- ◆ Limit gas and electric water heating by using solar water heaters and renewable fuels
- ◆ Incorporate stormwater management procedures and the regular checking of facilities for proper function in maintenance schedules
- ◆ Create a water use plan and map including totals and peak usage rates
- ◆ Try to use mains water and sanitation instead of transporting water and waste, and otherwise use on-site storage tanks to minimize the number of wastewater trips

Conservation & Education

- ◆ Display signs at washing areas promoting considerate water use
- ◆ Make sure staff are trained to detect and report leaks of water
- ◆ Water plants early or late in the day to lose less water to evaporation
- ◆ Replace lawns with gardens, food forests, xeriscapes, or other water-efficient options
- ◆ Conduct a water use audit to establish a baseline need and gather information to plan water use reduction projects
- ◆ Low-flush toilets, faucet, and shower-head aerators, and automatic taps can reduce consumption by 70%
- ◆ Limit the impact of washing by encouraging the use of natural soaps and detergents and provide communal hand-washing stations with non-toxic products
- ◆ Consider if your climate and location could benefit from a green roof or other rain water catchment system

FACTS:

According to the World Atlas “Of the waters occupying 70% of the earth’s surface, only 3% is considered fresh water. Furthermore, about 2.6% of this freshwater is inaccessible for humans. They’re either locked up in polar ice caps and glaciers, stored in the atmosphere or soil, are highly polluted or are too far underneath the earth’s surface to be extracted. This leaves us with roughly 0.4% of the earth’s water which is usable and drinkable to be shared among the 7 billion of its inhabitants.”

Reusing gray water can substantially improve water efficiency initiatives. “The main difference between <gray water and black water is that> black water has come into contact with fecal matter. Fecal matter is a haven for harmful bacteria and disease-causing pathogens. Additionally, this waste doesn’t break down and decompose in the water fast or effectively enough for use in domestic irrigation without the risk of contamination. Gray water, on the other hand, has not come into contact with solid human waste. This dramatically decreases the risk of disease and increases the speed at which it can be broken down and safely reabsorbed into an active garden.

If the household chemicals in gray water are kept to a minimum, most plants will be able to handle it. You can keep chemical contamination to a minimum by using environmentally friendly, biodegradable soaps and detergents whenever possible.” - How Stuff Works

Replacing high-use flush toilets with composting toilets can save an average of 180,000 liters of water per year, and returns valuable nutrients to the soil.

Waste Water

- Compost toilets should be used when possible, utilizing the waste as fertilizer
- Design ways to capture and reuse gray water for watering or fertilizing gardens
- Consider creating wetlands, leach fields, or other systems to enable gray water recycling
- Use energy and water efficient laundry facilities and non-toxic detergents
- Provide natural hand soaps and dish detergents for guests, vendors and staff

Case Studies

Compost Toilets

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

With only four compost toilets onsite in 2014, we significantly increased compost toilet construction and use in 2015, adding 56 stalls, and taking 2 out of commission, leaving us with a total of 54 compost toilets.

Portable toilets almost eliminated, with this being the goal for 2016. Aside from humus' use as a potent natural fertilizer, our compost toilets saved approximately 28,800 gallons (1.6gal/flush x 3 times/day x 6k people) of fresh water per day, compared to typical low-flow flush toilets in the United States and Canada.

Automatic Water Taps

Cambridge Folk Festival, UK

This festival's water initiatives include water taps available to refill water bottles, taps used by campers that automatically switch off to conserve water, and backstage water coolers instead of plastic bottles.



Biological Treatment

Boom Festival, Portugal

All the water from restaurants, bars, showers, and other facilities is recycled on site by a radically innovative biological treatment system. Boom's water treatment system is based on bio-remediation and evapotranspiration. All gray water passes through a living filter before it is allowed to infiltrate back in the soil. The gray water passes through a series of garden beds where it is allowed to evaporate while the roots of aquatic plants undertake the first cleaning of the water removing minerals and storing them in their leaves. The result is crystal clear water ready for re-use in irrigation. No further treatment required, the water is tested and all environmental regulations met.



Building

Our buildings and living spaces have not only significant influence on the health of their users but also the health of the environment. Their construction and maintenance can use lots of energy and natural resources including fresh water, and a range of minerals and rare materials. Thoughtful design to reduce and manage waste can lengthen building longevity and minimize maintenance and use costs. Considering life-cycle costs and embodied energy in each material and process decision can illuminate options which are both more economical and environmentally preferable.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Energy Efficiency in Building Design

- ◆ Choose builders, architects, and engineers with experience optimizing buildings for efficiency and sustainability
- ◆ Incorporate energy efficiency measures in the design and construction stages, and plan for solar panels or other renewable energy generation
- ◆ Air conditioning should be avoided in favor of energy-efficient solutions such as fans and shading
- ◆ Use passive cooling systems and natural ventilation in favor of energy consuming options
- ◆ Before constructing new buildings, consider if any existing ones be modernized, redeveloped or refurbished
- ◆ Consider if temporary facilities are available and could be sufficient for event needs
- ◆ Double glazing should be used, and windows correctly sealed, stripped, and caulked to prevent heat loss
- ◆ Consider a green roof for insulation, stormwater management and water conservation
- ◆ Use compost toilets where possible, and otherwise, prioritize waterless or dual-flush toilets



FACTS:

From the Appropedia: 'Appropriate technology can be described as the simplest level of technology that can effectively achieve the intended purpose in a given location.'

Conducting a life-cycle cost analysis can identify when more sustainable materials may ultimately cost less despite a higher initial purchase price; the main considerations are cost to purchase, own, operate, maintain, and dispose.

Closely related to life-cycle cost is the concept of embodied energy, which is a measure of the total energy necessary throughout an item's life-cycle. This energy focused metric illustrates more factors in a material's impact on the planet, by considering raw material extraction, transport, manufacture, assembly, installation, disassembly, deconstruction and decomposition.

Building Materials

- ◆ Wherever possible, local materials and products should be used. The venue should be constructed using sustainably-sourced or recycled material which meets LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards) or BREEAM guidelines
- ◆ Minimize use of materials with a high environmental impact, such as plastics, foams and concrete
- ◆ Use recycled and repurposed materials for stages, booths, and other installations
- ◆ If paint is needed, use eco-friendly options (non and low-VOCs) and light colors (reducing the need for artificial lighting)
- ◆ Cooperate with other local events and plan for future reuse of materials

Natural Landscaping

- ◆ Only clear vegetation or trees if absolutely necessary and offset what you remove with planting the same vegetation elsewhere
- ◆ In cases of flooding, consider installing temporary drainage systems
- ◆ Use only native plants and avoid introducing invasive species
- ◆ Use natural forms of shading where possible

Case Studies

Eco Building & Other Materials

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

Locally-sourced bamboo is the primary construction material for all on-site structures. All bamboo is stored for reuse in future years or resold on the market. Bamboo joints are saved and turned into cups, and internodes are used to construct bowls.

Envision Cafe prepares local, fair trade, organic, vegetarian food on reusable plates and healthy beverages poured in reusable cups. Klean Kanteen steel water bottles sold on site. Reused and repurposed materials are utilized as much as possible. All reusable materials left on the site deliberately – such as camping equipment; plastic sheets and tarps; reusable plates, cups, and utensils; rope and string; nails and screws; and anything else potentially useful – is stored onsite and is used for future events and site improvements. No physical tickets of any kind were mailed out, thus not using any paper or ink for this purpose. All tickets were presented to the box office via smartphone QR codes, and people were given the option to print at home.





Food & Beverage

Minimizing the impact of our food choices is an easy and profoundly beneficial way to support the local community and environment.

Project Drawdown recently completed a comprehensive study looking at the main solutions available for addressing climate change on a global scale. Each solution reduces greenhouse gases by avoiding emissions and/or by sequestering carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere. Their list of the top 100 shows that food-focused solutions are #3 and #4 and that efforts to reduce food waste and encourage plant-rich diets combined would be the single most impactful solution.

When looking to improve the impact of our food system on health and the environment, great solutions exist at each level of production and supply, from processing, packaging, sourcing, transportation, waste reduction, materials use, supporting the local economy, avoiding chemicals, and more.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Management & Policies

- ◆ Designate a department or director focused on improving the sustainability and efficiency of the events food procurement and service
- ◆ Create policies for event procurement and vendors prioritizing fresh, local, organic, seasonal, non-GMO food suppliers and eco-cleaning products
- ◆ Integrate food policies into staff and vendor contracts
- ◆ Monitor and adjust portion sizes in order to reduce waste
- ◆ Use table service instead of buffets when possible
- ◆ When using buffets, consider extending service times and using smaller plates to reduce waste and overfilling
- ◆ Encourage or require reusable cups, plates and utensils
- ◆ Encourage participants to grow their own food and provide empowering information like tips, recipes, supplier's locations, and the FLOSN guidelines (fresh, local, organic, seasonal, non-GMO)
- ◆ Design event menus using the FLOSN guidelines
- ◆ Create multi-year purchase agreements with suppliers
- ◆ Support or create a CSA project to meet any large produce needs
- ◆ Invite a local environmental group to set up a booth educating guests on the importance and benefits of organic agriculture



Packaging & Waste

- ◆ Use jars and other reusable containers, and avoid food packaging like styrofoam and plastic
- ◆ Provide ample water filling stations to encourage the use of reusable bottles
- ◆ Provide compost and recycling/reuse bins at easily accessible locations throughout the venue
- ◆ Donate leftovers and unused supplies to local charities and environmental groups
- ◆ Use reusable cloths, towels, plates, and cutlery instead of using single-use disposables
- ◆ Though compostable items are preferable to plastic, they still have a high footprint compared to reusable items



Vendors & Supply Chain

- ◆ Require vendors to follow the event's sustainable food procurement and service guidelines
- ◆ When serving alcohol, domestic brands are better for the local economy and consider offering a range of non-alcoholic options
- ◆ Recognize and celebrate the most sustainable vendor's food choices through awards and announcements
- ◆ Offer discounts and other incentives to vendors who sell more sustainable products such as local, organic, plant-based or Fairtrade foods
- ◆ Prohibit the sale of endangered fish products or other products with excess environmental impact

Case Studies

Organic Rebate

Peat's Ridge Festival, Australia

Vendors receive a \$500 rebate on stall fees after presenting receipts for \$2,000 worth of certified organic produce.

Organic Policy

Sunrise Festival, UK

Sunrise Festival organizers have established a site-wide organic policy for all food and drinks, including alcohol. As part of this policy, all suppliers of consumable goods are expected to achieve a minimum of 85% organic content in their wares. To encourage vendors to use local suppliers, organizers have established The Sunrise Local Organic Food Initiative, which aims to minimize the environmental cost of transporting goods.

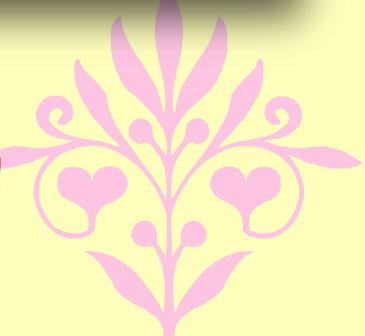
FACTS:

The Lexicon of Sustainability has clarified some simple guidelines to help consumers identify healthy and sustainable food choices. They suggest we eat FLOSN: Fresh, Local, Organic, Seasonal, and non-GMO as a way to care for our personal health, local community, and the environment.

A family of four using plastic water bottles every day for a year creates as much CO₂ as an international flight.



Energy



Making wise and efficient use of energy requires thoughtful planning and an integrated approach. Proper equipment selection regarding size, fuel type, conservation options, and efficiency is central to minimizing the environmental impact of our machines. Choosing venues that have been well designed to reduce the need for energy (through layout, efficiency, insulation, lighting, natural cooling, etc.) is a great way to reduce costs and environmental impacts.

Though renewable energy is great, remember the importance of first designing to reduce energy need, and then being as energy efficient as possible, before focusing on how the energy is sourced and finally on how to mitigate impacts of energy used. Energy savings is one of the areas that is easy to align with financial priorities, so many options exist for conservation throughout event production.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Energy Conservation & Efficiency

- ◆ Set goals to become carbon neutral by minimizing use and offsetting
- ◆ Create and communicate policies about energy efficiency and report on progress towards zero-impact goals
- ◆ Use fans instead of air conditioning
- ◆ Install and use programmable thermostats
- ◆ Set temperatures on HVAC and water heaters as low as possible
- ◆ Use individual thermostats in multi-area venues
- ◆ Ensure that energy-saving features are enabled on electronic equipment and appliances
- ◆ Utilize natural light whenever possible, turn off unnecessary lighting, and use LED bulbs
- ◆ Conduct an energy-efficiency audit and use report as guide for future conservation efforts
- ◆ Research and apply for local energy saving incentive programs
- ◆ Make sure windows and doors shut tightly to reduce need for cooling and heating
- ◆ Reduce the need for business travel by utilizing video & tele-conferencing
- ◆ Establish a 'no-idling' policy for all guests, staff and volunteers
- ◆ Unplug appliances when not in use
- ◆ Consider an escalating price tariff for vendors to encourage lower usage

FACTS:

Pedaling ten bikes can power a small stage using energy efficient equipment.

Over 3,000 phones at Shambala Festival in the UK were charged using either a pedal or solar power, and 91% of all the power used came from waste vegetable oil.

In 2008, Boom collected and re-used 45,000 liters of waste vegetable oil for the generators. This avoided the emission of 117,000 kg of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Generators are typically most efficient when operated at about 75% of their capacity.

FACT:

After taking steps to reduce the total energy needed, purchasing carbon offsets can help further reduce environmental impact. The funds are invested in projects like reforestation to reduce an equivalent volume of CO₂. Careful consideration should be given to the method of offset as some programs are much more effective than others. Check out <http://www.communitycarbontrees.org/> for the most regenerative and holistic model we've seen.

Venue Infrastructure & Equipment

- ◆ Select a venue that is the right size for expected attendance to be efficient with heating, cooling and lighting
- ◆ Purchase or rent energy-efficient appliances and equipment
- ◆ Generate renewable power on-site via biogas, rocket stoves, solar panels, hydro, or wind
- ◆ Consider using renewable energy powered generators that are smaller and more efficient
- ◆ Create pedal-power stations for phone charging, and solar trailers for lighting at night
- ◆ Use smart meters to view real-time energy use and patterns, and create energy use maps to identify best strategies for energy generation and conservation
- ◆ Determine if larger equipment shared centrally, or smaller equipment distributed throughout the venue is more sustainable and economical



Heating & Cooling

- ◆ Maximize the potential for passive solar heating and passive cooling by wind
- ◆ Maximize the use of solar thermal heating for water and spaces
- ◆ Consider installing a biomass absorption chiller to produce zero carbon cooling
- ◆ Close windows and curtains at night
- ◆ Consider building rocket stoves for space heating

Case Studies

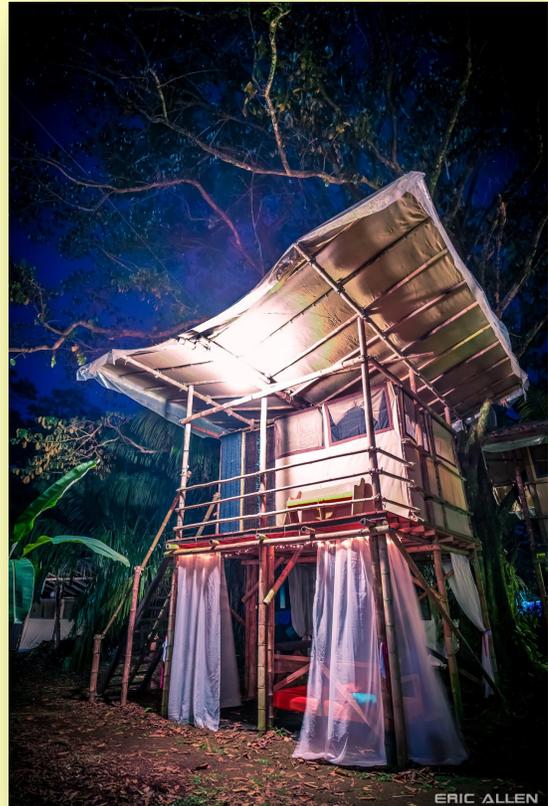
Biodiesel Generators

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

Biodiesel generators power all stages. Biodiesel produces fewer air pollutants (other than nitrogen oxides) and greenhouse gases than diesel fuel and is also biodegradable, non-toxic, and easier to handle. The biodiesel we use is domestically produced from non-petroleum, renewable resources.

Initiatives in place to reduce energy use include: Energy-efficient LED lighting for stage decoration and ambiance. Lighting in the art installation, gallery and workshop areas, as well as along pathways, is run on rechargeable batteries, many of which are solar-powered. Demand for generators reduced through efficient planning for placement, distribution, and usage patterns.

Rancho La Merced is connected to grid electricity, which is over 90% powered by renewable sources in Costa Rica. We supplied electricity for all build activities and art installations during the event with grid power.



Solar Trailer

Mariposa Folk Festival, Canada

In 2015, a pedal power station was set up to allow visitors to use their own energy by pedaling a stationary bike to charge their cell phones. Also, a solar trailer was used to power the late night stage in the camping area.

Energy Playground

Coachella, United States

Coachella has something called the Energy Playground/Factory. Festival attendees can learn about the latest advances in energy and ways to lower their footprint. Exhibits include bike charging cell phone stations, organic screen printing, solar powered mannequins, biodiesel workshops, and more. Includes the energy factory DJ mixer; the human-powered DJ stage. It allows anyone to play, so long as they recruit 35 friends or fans to power their sets. Bikes, hand cranks, swings, seesaws, and human-sized energy wheels provide the energy.



Camping



The camping area is where most attendees call home during the event, and many of the choices they make while there have a significant impact on the sustainability of the event.

Event producers can support campers in managing their wastes, living harmoniously with the local plants and animals, and with education on choosing durably designed camping equipment.

By offering camping equipment rentals, effective waste sorting stations, and access to water conserving toilets and fixtures, event producers can come close to achieving a leave no trace policy.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Facilities

- ◆ Use renewable energy for lights and other campsite needs
- ◆ Offer a camping equipment rental program for tents, sleeping bags, and other commonly needed items
- ◆ Provide recycling and composting bins in the camping area
- ◆ Provide water filling stations and encourage reusable bottles
- ◆ Use compost toilets if possible, or select low-water use toilets
- ◆ Provide dishwashing and handwashing stations



Environmental Impact

- ◆ Contact local wildlife groups to make sure that the immediate area is not home to and sensitive wildlife that could be affected by the campsite
- ◆ Invite local wildlife groups to educate guests about the local wildlife
- ◆ Educate campers and provide encouraging signs reminding to tread lightly, respect wildlife, and leave the area better than they found it
- ◆ Encourage and reward eco-friendly behavior with drinks or event materials
- ◆ Recruit volunteers to spread education in the camping area on locations and methods for waste management

FACTS:

A BNU research of festival goers' waste found out that up to 80% was produced at the campsite.

The Isle of Wight Festival estimates that about 1 in 4 tents was left behind in the campsites, about 12,000 tents in 2011.

Waste

- ◆ Any camping equipment left behind should be reused, repaired, or recycled
- ◆ Provide gray water collection area and discourage inappropriate disposal
- ◆ Discourage or prohibit disposable products
- ◆ Commit to year over year waste to landfill reduction goals
- ◆ Coordinate a waste into art project for kids



Case Studies

Easy Sorting Bins

Mariposa Folk Festival, Canada

Throughout the campsite at Mariposa Folk Festival are multiple waste stations. They provide waste bins, recycling bins, and compost bins. The bins have plastic bags in them so that campers can more easily see what type of materials go in each, and there is signage to depict what goes where to reduce the amount going to the landfill.

Incentives to Manage Waste

Camp Bestival, UK

Bags are given out in the campsites for recycling items such as plastic bottles, cans, newspapers, leaflets and cartons. Incentives are provided if people bring them to designated points, such as free tea for every full bag of recycling presented.



Decoration Re-Use

Ilosaarirock Festival, Finland

After the festival, you can leave dismantled and packed tents and shelters at the info points. They will be used for the next festival to make festival decorations and other nice stuff. Those who recycle a tent get a surprise gift!



Waste & Resource Recovery

Effective waste minimization, management, and reuse strategies are a vital part of minimizing the environmental impact of events.

As you consider the ideas in this section, remember that efforts to prioritize not producing waste in the first place are more impactful than even the best reuse or recycling programs. Improving design so as to not produce waste in the first place is most effective. Then finding ways to reduce the amount of waste produced, reuse waste outputs as inputs for other processes, recycling, and finally only disposing when necessary.

When considering waste minimization strategies, sometimes optimizing the current approach is best, and other times, zooming out can identify even better solutions. For instance, minimizing waste from packaging is a valuable effort, yet an even greater impact can be found by considering alternative products that don't require packaging.

Ideas, Tips & Tactics

Facilities

- ◆ Provide many clearly-marked and regularly processed bins for separation of plastic, glass, metal, and compostables
- ◆ Use composting toilets when possible, otherwise look for water-efficient urinals and toilets like low-flush and dual-flush systems
- ◆ Coordinate a rental service for participants to always have access to reusable cutlery, cups, and plates to reduce waste from disposable products
- ◆ Provide staff with reusable containers for beverages

FACT:

ZeroHero Events estimates that the amount of compost, recyclables, cardboard, and landfill waste (by weight) for a large outdoor event follows the approximate ratio of 4:3:2:1. For instance, if an event generated 1,000 pounds of total waste, the breakdown for each type would be:

- 400 pounds of compost (compostable products, food, paper, etc.)
- 300 pounds of recyclables (aluminum, glass, and plastics #1 - #6)
- 200 pounds of cardboard (from food and beverage vendors)
- 100 pounds of landfill waste (tape, plastic bags, contamination, etc.)

Materials

- ◆ Consider the toxicity of every material used, and prioritize non and low polluting options
- ◆ Make sure all cleaning products are biodegradable and free of toxic chemicals
- ◆ When printing is necessary, aim for efficiency through tactics like: double-siding, minimizing colors, plan for reuse by avoiding dates, use recycled paper, water based inks, and renewably powered printers
- ◆ Try to generate zero hazardous waste and avoid pesticides, herbicides, fungicides
- ◆ Donate abandoned tents, clothes, decorations, etc to local community projects
- ◆ Use locally produced compostable cups, plates, and paper products

Policy

- ◆ Design a zero-waste policy and communicate it to staff, vendors and guests
- ◆ Complete a waste audit (for a description of the benefits and process see: <https://greenfestivals.ca/waste-audit-information/>)
- ◆ Create materials guidelines for attendees, staff and vendors on appropriate products to avoid the contamination of local water systems and reduce waste
- ◆ Remind volunteers of the zero-waste policy and organize a group to assist attendees with sorting of waste
- ◆ Offer incentives for anyone that collects 50 pieces of trash or volunteers to clean the venue
- ◆ Prohibit disposable plastic and provide reusable options at food vendors and available for sale
- ◆ Minimize paper and printer use by encouraging digital communication, online registration, virtual info booths, websites, and apps



Case Studies

Waste Management & Landfill Minimization

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

No landfill materials of any kind given out at the Festival by production, food vendors, merchandise vendors, or any other official contributors. The Eco Team separates all recycling from landfill materials on site, thus minimizing volume sent to the landfills as much as possible.

All biodegradable materials kept separate from landfill and recycling streams. Campers encouraged to leave their camping trash at the Eco-Hub (the Eco Team's headquarters) because of the logistics of carrying trash off-site without a vehicle. Disposable plates, cups & utensils eliminated, except for compostable reserve cups at the bars. Bottle caps, cigarette butts, plastic bags and wrappers, non-reusable tarps, and waxed and plastic-lined paper are about the only items that were not compostable and or recyclable generated in any significant amount at Envision.

Signage & 3D Image Boards

Envision Festival, Costa Rica

We created 3D Image boards that go with our Bilingual signage and color coding for our stations. The boards have the actual objects cut to size for each of the different type of materials for the station. We tend to add to it the items people have a had time with, so that if they are confused at a station with what goes where they can look at the boards and know. It works very well and helps reduce contamination in the barrels. You can always tell what items are the hardest for people to understand where they go by looking before and after the event at the boards and see what items have been added to them. This project was a great success for 2018.

Before



After



Reusable Eco Cup

Pop Montreal, Canada

The festival will be eliminating the use of one-time plastic cups/water bottles and replacing them with reusable eco-cups and stainless steel bottles. A reimbursable deposit of \$2 purchases the first drink, provided in a durable eco-cup. These reusable cups are used throughout the event and can be returned to get the \$2 back.

Overall Waste Reduction

Bumbershoot Festival, United States

At the Bumbershoot Festival in Seattle, there are recycling bins throughout the grounds. All Styrofoam has been banned. Non-disposable water bottles are encouraged, and the use of free water stations provided. Food vendors recycle all grease and turn it into biodiesel. All vendors take part in the pre-consumer composting program recycling food scraps into compost. Compost stations and recycling bins are set-up throughout the festival grounds.

Compostable Everything

Mariposa Folk Festival, Canada

All food and beverage vendors at Mariposa serve their food on 100% compostable material. That includes the cups and glasses, bowls, plates, utensils. All of the serving ware at Mariposa is made from 100% renewable resources including wheat and corn starches, sugars and plant oils. This is a major shift away from petroleum products, and these bio-degradable bio-plastics use less energy to produce.

FACTS:

Preventing garbage from being sent to landfill helps to produce less CO₂, similar to energy efficiency and transportation projects. Carbon emissions vary widely by individual, though regional consumption patterns around the world show some patterns. A recent report in The Guardian shows 20 tons/person in the US, around 10 tons/person in Europe, 4.5 tons/person in China, and ranging from 1-5 tons/person in Latin America.

The Splore Festival had a rate of 73% of waste diverted from landfill in 2014. They have the goal of becoming a zero waste festival, with a subgoal of 85% diversion for 2015. In 2014, the Cambridge Folk Festival sent just 393kg to landfill which was less than 2% of their total waste. Using a system of reusing glasses with a returnable deposit, they saved over 40,000 plastic glasses being used and thrown away each year.

James Branch Cabell · BREWER

Resources & Bibliography



Event Production

Envision Festival - Information on eco-initiatives
<https://envisionfestival.com/about-envision/eco-initiatives/>
<https://envisionfestival.com/envision-sustainability-report/>

Department of Consciousness - Educational films about waste management
<https://www.doczerowaste.com/eco-educational-films>

Green Festivals - Resources and best practice ideas for event producers
<https://greenfestivals.ca/>

The 'Good Food for Festivals Guide'
https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/good_food_for_festivals_guide/

Association of Independent Festivals - Resource area for event producers
<https://aiforg.com/resources/>

Powerful Thinking - Fact sheets with advice and resources on powering events
<http://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets/>

Sociocracy 3.0 - Dynamic Governance Tools
<https://sociocracy30.org/resources/>

Liberating Structures - Tools to Include and Unleash Everyone
<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/ls-menu/>



Permaculture (Building, Food, Energy)

Upward Spirals - Sustainable Solutions & Regenerative Lifestyles Library
<https://upwardspirals.net/regenerative-library/>

The 'Inventory of Carbon & Energy' - data on the embodied energy of building materials
http://www.appropedia.org/images/5/56/ICE_Version_1.6a.pdf

Institute for Appropriate Technology - Resource Library
<http://www.i4at.org/library.html>

Low-Tech Magazine - Low Tech Solutions
<https://www.lowtechmagazine.com/low-tech-solutions.html>

Farm Hack - Open Source Farming Tools and OS
<http://farmhack.org/tools>

Open Source Ecology - Open Source Blueprints
<https://www.opensourceecology.org/>

Ekopedia - Wikipedia-like Resource Directory (French)
<http://ekopedia.osremix.com/>

InfoJardin - Articles & Guides on Permaculture & Gardening (Spanish)
http://articulos.infojardin.com/todas_paginas_com.htm

Oregon State University - Free Online Permaculture Design Course
<https://open.oregonstate.edu/courses/permaculture/>

Platforms to find Work-Trade Opportunities and Sustainability/ Permaculture Education
www.numundo.org

www.woof.org

www.helpx.net

www.ic.org

www.workaway.info

<https://yogatrade.com>



Ecovillage & Community

Global Ecovillage Network - Solution Library
<https://ecovillage.org/solutions/>

Transition Towns - Knowledge Hub
<http://transitionus.org/knowledge-hub>

Shareable - Sharing Cities Toolkit
<https://www.shareable.net/sharing-cities-toolkit>

United Diversity Coop - Sustainability and Permaculture Library
<http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/>

Community-Wealth.org - Resources on Community Wealth Building
<https://community-wealth.org/>

350.org - Resources for Organizers
<https://trainings.350.org/for/organisers/>

Praxis Makes Perfect - Resources for Organizers
<https://joshuakahnruessell.wordpress.com/resources-for-activists-and-organizers/>

The Earth Charter
http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_english.pdf



Economy: Sharing, Circular, Cooperative

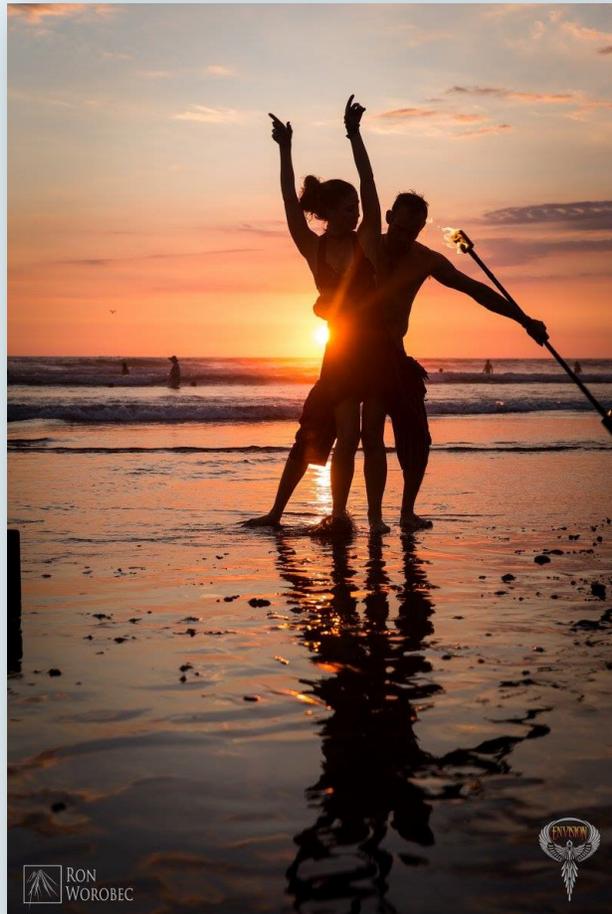
Schumacher Center - Library for a New Economics
<https://opac.libraryworld.com/opac/home.php>

Ellen MacArthur Foundation - Circular Economy Educational Resources
<https://kumu.io/ellenmacarthurfoundation/educational-resources>

New Economy - Resources Library
<https://neweconomy.net/resources>

Nasco - Shared Resource Library for Cooperatives
<https://www.nasco.coop/resources>

Cultivate.coop - Library of Information about Cooperatives
http://cultivate.coop/wiki/Main_Page



Social Enterprise & Sustainable Business

Social Enterprise Alliance - Knowledge Center
<https://socialenterprise.us/knowledgecenter>

SE Toolbelt - Open Content Resource Hub for Social Entrepreneurs
<http://www.setoolbelt.org/>

Upward Spirals - Social Enterprise Development & Incubation
<https://upwardspirals.net/catalyst-consulting/>





About the Envision Festival

A 4-Day festival perfectly nestled where the Pacific Ocean meets the wild jungle of Costa Rica. As a celebration dedicated to awakening our human potential, Envision Festival provides a platform for different cultures to collide harmoniously in regenerative community. We aim to inspire one another through collective participation in art, spirituality, yoga, music, dance, performance, education, regenerative strategies and our fundamental connection with nature. We'd love to share this experience with you.



The 8 Pillars of Envision: The foundation of why and what we do



PERMACULTURE

End Single Use, Regenerative Design, Land Stewardship, Reforestation, Resource Management, Earthcare-PeopleCare-FareShare



SPIRITUALITY

Nature, Meditation, Ceremony, Consciousness, Energy



MOVEMENT

Dance, Yoga, Performance, Martial Arts



ART

Live, Visual, Installations, Digital, Expressive



MUSIC

Cross Cultural, Celebration, Composition, Sound Healing, Technology



COMMUNITY

Collaboration, Participation, Diversity, Intercultural, Safety, Family



HEALTH

Nutrition, bodywork, herbal medicine, energy work, organic & local food



ECO BUILDING

Minimum Impact, Renewable materials, integrated systems design, ethical labor sourcing

What does the Eco-Hub do? It's here that our team of expert eco-warriors toil day and night to ensure that any waste that is produced is sorted, and repurposed wherever possible. It's not just about recycling. It's about keeping us true to our mission to make Envision Festival the best experience we can – for people AND planet.

Envision is a Leave No Trace event, and we therefore always leave the land in as good if not better condition than we found it. We try to minimize waste sent to the landfills and maximize recycling and composting rates, conserve water as much as possible, and mitigate our atmospheric impact from transportation and energy, source only environmentally-sound products and materials, and we work to maintain positive relations with our surrounding community.

This year, we have been nominated for “Outstanding Green Event of 2018” at 2018 FestX Awards, and we are honored to uphold such a title and to be recognized for our environmentally conscious initiatives.

If you would like to work with the [Envision Festival](#) or any of our eco-initiatives, get in touch! We want to hear from you! Participate@envisionfestival.com



About Upward Spirals

Co-founder, Eric Baudry has helped organizations become more financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable since 2001. Initially, for a management consulting company serving Fortune 500 companies, and together with HappE Roberts in 2014 created [Upward Spirals](#), a nonprofit regenerative think tank, and consulting company, focused on magnifying the impact of wellness and education centers and regenerative leaders.

We help social entrepreneurs, event producers, intentional communities, permaculture projects, wellness centers, and environmental educators maximize their impact through management coaching on strategic, financial, and organizational development planning, business model design, social entrepreneurship training, and event planning and production systems and tools.



Guide produced by Upward Spirals with the Envision Festival 2019



*We encourage you to share this guide with others,
and to consider what information your organization has that it could share to accelerate sustainability.*