

Sustainable Event Guide





Introduction

Dubai has established itself as a global leader in hosting events that inspire change, drive collaboration, champion industry and create lasting impressions. As part of this leadership, the city is deeply committed to sustainability as a core pillar—ensuring that events contribute positively to society while reducing their environmental impact. For associations and companies planning their events in Dubai, aligning with this vision not only reinforces their commitment to environmental responsibility but also showcases their values on a global stage.

This guide offers straightforward, actionable strategies to help you reduce your event's carbon footprint while maintaining excellence and impact. By simplifying and implementing the guidance provided here, you can ensure that every step taken—from planning to execution—makes a meaningful contribution to environmental sustainability. The measures outlined aim to streamline sustainable practices, making them easy to adopt without compromising the quality or success of your event.

By embracing these practices, you can actively contribute to Dubai's vision of a greener future while delivering world-class events that leave a positive legacy both locally and globally.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

The planning phase is a vital opportunity to embed sustainability into your event from the outset. By taking a proactive approach early on, organisers can significantly reduce environmental impact, align with Dubai's commitment to eco-friendly practices, and set the stage for a more responsible event experience. Thoughtful preparation ensures that every element—from venue selection to resource management—contributes to lowering carbon emissions and enhancing overall efficiency.

1.1 Venue Selection

Choosing the right venue is one of the most impactful decisions in the pre-event planning phase. The venue you select not only sets the tone for your event but also plays a significant role in its environmental footprint. When assessing venues, **consider the following key elements:**



Energy-Efficient Buildings

Look for venues with eco-friendly infrastructure, such as energy-efficient lighting, heating, cooling systems, and water management practices.



Accessibility to Public Transport

Opt for venues that are well-connected through public transport networks. Encouraging attendees to use buses, trains, or shared transport options helps reduce the carbon footprint associated with travel.



Sustainability Certification

Whenever possible, select venues with recognised sustainability certifications (e.g., ISO 20121, EarthCheck, Green Globe) that demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Recommendation

Dubai offers world-class venues that emphasise sustainability and environmental responsibility:



Expo City Venues

A district within Dubai that blends cutting-edge technologies with expansive green spaces, Expo City is dedicated to maximising its social, environmental, and economic benefits. Hosting over 30 indoor and outdoor venues, Expo City is recognised internationally for its green building designs, with LEED-certified buildings showcasing sustainability at their core. Moreover, Expo City is highly accessible by metro, reinforcing its commitment to eco-friendly transport solutions.



Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC)

Certified by Green Globe and ISO 20121:2012, DWTC drives sustainability through rooftop solar panels generating over 77.5 MWh of energy, its energy-efficient systems, and the venue's easy public transport metro access. The venue has reduced food wastage having diverted over 10,000 kg of food waste from landfills via composting and donations, earning the UAE Food Bank Award. With LEED-certified buildings and initiatives like waste segregation and a 'No Plastic Bottles' campaign, DWTC continues to set benchmarks for sustainable event delivery.

1.2 Accommodation Selection

Accommodation choices can significantly influence the environmental impact of an event, from energy and water usage to transport-related emissions. In Dubai, event organisers and delegates have access to a wide range of world-class hotels that combine exceptional service with a growing commitment to sustainability. Supporting this, the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) Stamp recognises hotels that meet robust sustainability standards — encouraging the industry to adopt greener practices and reinforcing Dubai’s position as a responsible global destination for business events.

Recommendation

When selecting lodging options, **keep the following sustainability criteria in mind:**



Energy-Efficiency

Prioritise hotels that use energy-saving systems such as LED lighting, renewable energy sources, and smart energy management technologies.



Water Conservation

Choose accommodations that have water-saving measures in place, including low-flow fixtures, greywater recycling, and responsible water use policies.



Waste Management

Opt for properties that actively reduce waste through recycling programmes, responsible disposal methods, and minimal reliance on single-use plastics.



Transport Access

Recommend hotels located near public transport or those that provide shuttle services to reduce reliance on private vehicles.



Sustainability Certifications

Look for hotels with recognised certifications such as LEED, EarthCheck, or Green Key. You can also consider properties certified under the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) Stamp, which recognises hotels that meet Dubai’s rigorous sustainability standards. [Learn more.](#)

1.3 Digital Communication and Registration

Digital transformation is a key enabler of sustainability. By shifting from traditionally paper-based processes to digital alternatives, event organisers can significantly reduce their environmental footprint—cutting down on paper waste, minimising resource consumption, and improving operational efficiency. Digital tools streamline communication, data collection, and attendee engagement, while also allowing for better tracking of environmental performance.

At the heart of Dubai’s digital journey is the Smart Dubai initiative with the aim to make Dubai the happiest and smartest city on Earth. The strategy aims to harness emerging technologies, particularly in artificial intelligence, blockchain, and data science, to improve quality of life, increase government efficiency, and promote sustainable urban living.



Recommendation

minimise paper use by utilising paperless alternatives such as digital tools for invitations, communication, and registration. These measures contribute to reducing waste and the energy associated with printing and distribution.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

transport is often one of the largest sources of carbon emissions associated with events, especially in cities that attract international audiences. Promoting sustainable mobility not only helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also improves air quality and urban liveability. Encouraging attendees to use low-emission or shared transport options is a critical step in organizing environmentally responsible events.

As part of Smart Dubai and the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, the city is actively transforming its transport network into a model of smart, integrated, and low-carbon mobility. The Dubai Autonomous Transport Strategy aims for 25% of all trips in the city to be made using autonomous vehicles by 2030, significantly reducing traffic congestion, emissions, and road accidents. Dubai has also invested heavily in expanding its public transport infrastructure, including the Dubai Metro, electric buses, and marine transit, to offer efficient, accessible, and eco-friendly alternatives.





Dubai currently implements the following eco-conscious transport efforts:



Dubai Metro

A fully automated rail system that operates on two main routes—the Red and Green Lines—offering a fast, efficient, and sustainable means of travel across Dubai.



Dubai Taxi

The city has transitioned to e-hailing taxis, reducing emissions by cutting down on wasted driving distance—e-hailed rides lower unnecessary travel by an average of 3 km per trip compared to conventional taxis. Additionally, 87% of Dubai Taxi Company PJSC (DTC)'s fleet consists of hybrid and electric vehicles, further contributing to sustainability efforts.



Careem/Uber

These ride-hailing apps provide convenient travel solutions while supporting Dubai's green mobility initiatives. Users can select electric or hybrid vehicles through the apps, reducing carbon footprints while maintaining comfort and reliability. Careem has also introduced Tesla Model S electric cars to enhance its eco-conscious fleet.



Bicycles

Encouraging cycling as a zero-emission alternative for short distances can further support sustainability efforts.



Recommendation

The following recommendations aim to minimise the environmental impact of transport:



Opt for strategic accommodation

Choose hotels and event venues located near metro stations to ensure easy access to public transport.



Promote metro usage

Encourage delegates to use the Dubai Metro as a primary mode of transport to reduce reliance on private vehicles.



Support e-hailing services

Advocate for the adoption of e-hailed taxis, particularly through apps like Careem, which offer eco-friendly vehicle options.



Encourage sustainable ride choices

Motivate delegates to select electric or hybrid vehicles when booking rides.



Advocate for carpooling

Reduce emissions by promoting shared travel arrangements among event attendees.

WASTE REDUCTION

STAY HYDRATED
IT'S A SEA
STATE OF MIND

Waste is one of the most visible—and often overlooked—environmental impacts of events. From single-use plastics and packaging to food waste and printed materials, the volume generated can quickly add up, especially at large-scale gatherings. Implementing thoughtful waste reduction strategies helps ease pressure on landfills, supports the circular economy, and strengthens the overall sustainability of your event.

Dubai is taking bold steps to become a zero-waste city, in line with the UAE's National Waste Management Strategy 2031 and the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. Waste reduction and resource recovery are central to the city's sustainability vision. **Some of the key initiatives in place include:**



Dubai Can

This city-wide initiative encourages a shift away from single-use plastic water bottles by providing free, safe drinking water at refill stations across Dubai. Visitors and residents are encouraged to carry reusable bottles as part of a more sustainable lifestyle.



Dubai's Recycling Ecosystem

The city is home to established recycling providers, such as Dulsco Environment Solutions, which offer full-scale event waste management services—including recycling, composting, and food waste diversion.



Recommendation



Sustainable Venue Choice

Choose venues that offer robust waste management systems and recycling infrastructure to help minimise event-related waste.



Encourage Refillable Bottles

Promote the use of reusable bottles among your team and attendees. You can also share the Dubai Can map to show where nearby water stations are located.



Clear Waste Segregation

Make it easy for attendees to dispose of waste responsibly by providing clearly marked bins for recycling, compost, and general waste

SUSTAINABLE CATERING

Catering is a vital part of any event—but it also has the potential to generate significant environmental impact. From the carbon footprint of imported ingredients to the challenge of managing leftover food, event catering requires conscious planning to be both environmentally and socially responsible. Embracing sustainable catering means selecting locally sourced, seasonal products, reducing food waste, and ensuring surplus food is redirected to where it is needed most.

Dubai is actively promoting sustainable food systems that balance environmental, economic, and social needs. As part of its broader vision for a resilient and self-sufficient city, Dubai is valorising the importance of **locally grown produce**, not only to reduce emissions from transport, but also to strengthen community-based agriculture and local supply chains. Using local ingredients at events supports this vision and enhances the authenticity of the culinary experience.

At the national level, the UAE is taking bold steps to combat food waste, a key sustainability challenge globally. **Two major initiatives stand out:**



Ne'ma – The National Food Loss and Waste Initiative

A collaborative platform that unites stakeholders across the food value chain to reduce food loss and waste through education, policy, and collective action.



UAE Food Bank

A non-profit organisation that collects surplus food from events, hotels, and retailers and redistributes it to those in need, both locally and internationally.

Recommendation



Highlight **Emirati-inspired menus** with locally sourced and seasonal ingredients to celebrate culture and reduce food miles.



Work with caterers who have strong sustainability practices



Partner with organisations like **UAE Food Bank** or **Neama** to donate surplus food.



INCLUSIVE EVENTS

Truly sustainable events go beyond reducing environmental impact—they also foster inclusivity, accessibility, and a sense of community. This means designing experiences that welcome everyone, encourage diverse participation, and create positive, lasting value for the people and places involved.

Dubai embraces diversity as a cornerstone of its global identity. With over 200 nationalities calling the city home, multiculturalism is at the heart of everyday life. Hosting inclusive events here means aligning with Dubai's broader vision—engaging different voices, moving past barriers to participation, and enriching the wider community.

The city continues to champion inclusion through initiatives such as:



Dubai Social Agenda 33

Focused on social well-being, this initiative promotes family stability, community participation, and equal opportunities for all residents.



Accessible Dubai

Aims to ensure universal access to public spaces and events, empowering people of determination to fully engage in cultural and urban life.



Dubai Community Development Authority (CDA)

Supports community programmes that drive inclusion, volunteering, and civic engagement across the city.



Recommendation



Plan with accessibility in mind—consider mobility, sensory, and language needs throughout the event experience.



Engage and include local community members in your planning to ensure your event is relevant and inclusive.



prioritise diverse representation across speakers, panels, and entertainment to reflect the richness of Dubai's population.

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

Clear, consistent communication is vital to the success of any sustainable event. It shapes how your sustainability goals are perceived, encourages active participation, and helps turn good intentions into meaningful action. True engagement goes beyond signage or announcements—it's about creating space for conversation, feedback, and shared ownership.

Dubai is fast becoming a global leader in sustainable innovation and citizen engagement. From creative campaigns to digital platforms, the city is inspiring residents and visitors alike to play a role in shaping a more sustainable future. Events that align with this participatory spirit can spark awareness, build community, and drive real change.

At the city level, **several initiatives are fostering this engagement:**



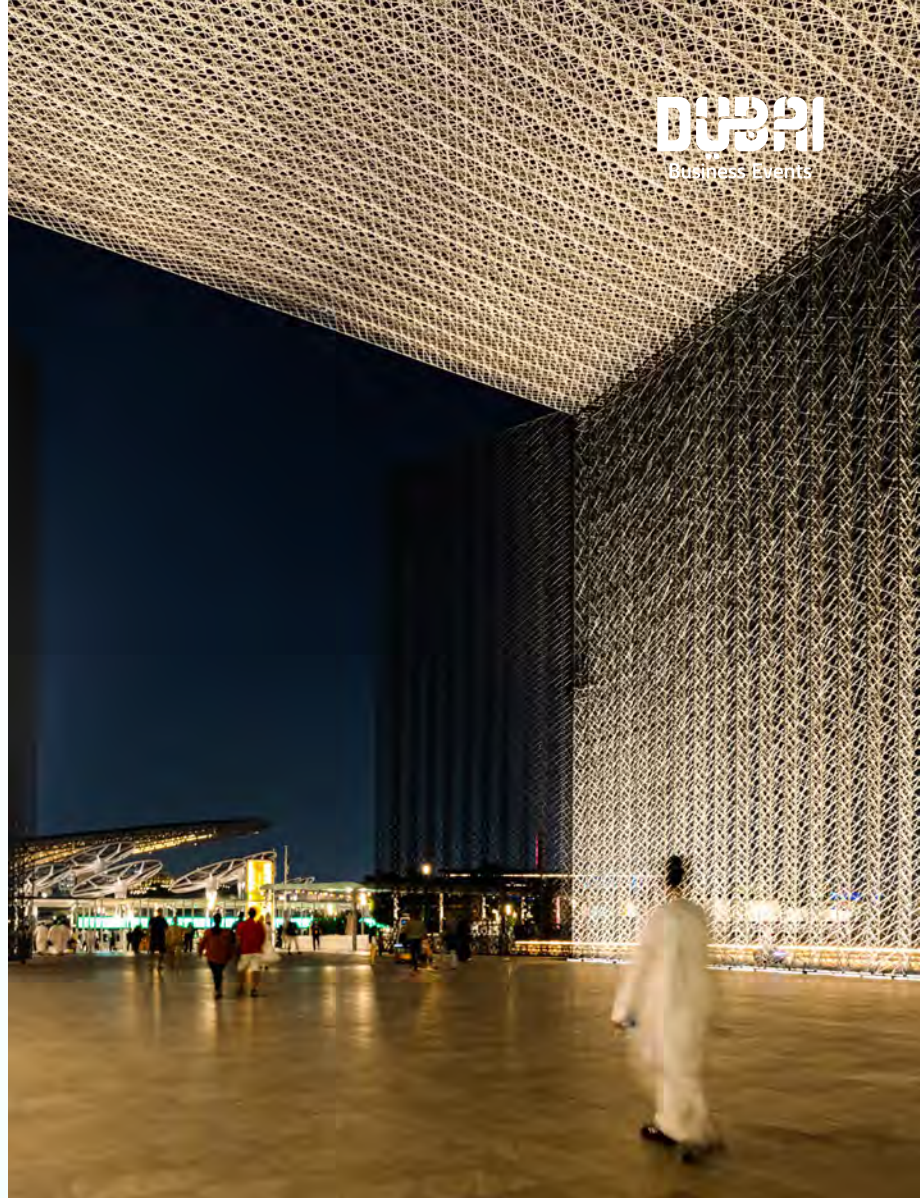
#DubaiDestinations

Focused on social well-being, this initiative promotes family stability, community participation, and equal opportunities for all residents.



#MyDubai

Aims to ensure universal access to public spaces and events, empowering people of determination to fully engage in cultural and urban life.



Recommendation



Communicate your event's sustainability goals early and clearly—through websites, signage, programmemes, and real-time updates.



Use social media to amplify messages and connect with attendees. Leverage platforms like **#DubaiDestinations** and **#MyDubai** to align with city-wide storytelling.



Make engagement fun and interactive—host sustainability workshops, pledge walls, or challenges that inspire action and learning.



Invite feedback. Give participants a voice through surveys, idea boards, or digital feedback tools.



Conclusion

As Dubai continues to position itself as a global leader in innovation and sustainability, every event held in the city presents an opportunity to contribute positively to its environmental and social goals. By embedding sustainable thinking from the very beginning, you can reduce environmental impact, promote responsible behaviour, and contribute to the city's long-term goals.

Together, we can help keep Dubai clean, resilient, and inspiring—while increasing the positive impact of every gathering.

Let your event become part of Dubai's sustainability story—one that's green, connected, and future-focused.

