



Creating sustainable and inclusive events

By embedding sustainability and accessibility into event planning, we can create experiences that are welcoming and inclusive. Considering the diverse needs of our attendees from the outset allows us to create events that are equitable, respectful and enjoyable for all. Every event is an opportunity to make more responsible choices, from the materials we use and the suppliers we engage, to the way we design spaces and communicate with our communities.

Hybrid events: Sustainable and accessible

Hybrid events provide an opportunity to reduce emissions while removing barriers to participation. By offering flexible ways to engage, organisers can create more inclusive experiences for diverse audiences.

Choosing accessible technology

- Select platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams that support accessibility features, including captions, screen readers and multilingual support.
- Enable and test the platform's accessibility features beforehand.
- Provide a phone number as an alternative dial-in method for participants with no computer or variable internet access.
- Offer a contact person who can assist with troubleshooting or any access requirements prior to and during the event.

Creating accessible content

- Adopt inclusive terminology when discussing disability ([PWDA Language Guide](#))
- Share event materials in accessible, editable formats wherever possible. Use tools such as the Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker (instead of pdfs) to review documents and ensure information is accessible for all attendees.
- Use clear and simple language with the assistance of applications like [Hemingway](#).
- Provide transcripts, captions (either automated or live) or sign language interpreters (upon request).
- Ensure presentations use [plain language](#), good colour contrast ([WebAIM](#)) and appropriate font size.
- Provide alternative text for images ([Vision Australia guide](#)).
- Design any interactive elements like polls and breakout sessions with inclusivity in mind, ensuring that activities are adjusted if any attendees disclose physical, cognitive or sensory disabilities.
- Use technology such as [ReadSpeaker](#) for embedding audio versions of text.
- Have accessible media and provide captions for videos and presentations. Be cautious of automatic caption services that have accuracy issues, especially if content is more technical or niche.

Offer accessible forms of engagement

- Design your events to encourage engagement and interaction by offering diverse ways for attendees to interact such as chat rooms, discussion forums and Q&A sessions with verbal and non-verbal/text-based options.
- Support attendees to confidently navigate the event by providing clear information about the event format, including whether presenters or participants are joining online. Use verbal updates throughout the event to guide attendees through key sections, activities and transitions, and provide clear instructions on how participants can engage.
- Consider offering on-demand content for those who cannot attend live.

Preparing for an inclusive and sustainable event

Thoughtful planning helps create events that are environmentally responsible, inclusive and welcoming for all attendees. Consider accessibility requirements early, including allocating budget for services such as live captioning or interpreters where needed.

Event Promotion

Encourage attendees to play an active role in supporting the sustainability of your event by sharing practical actions they can take before and during their attendance. This may include bringing reusable items such as keep cups, water bottles and stationery, choosing active or public transport options, and providing clear information on accessible travel options, including low-floor tram routes and accessible parking locations. Ensure these are communicated in accessible formats (refer above).

Event Registration

When creating your registration form, be sure to:

- Ask attendees to specify their accessibility requirements
- Outline the venue's accessibility features and sustainable transportation options
- Make note if the event will involve high stimulation, scents, flashing light (where possible, avoid this and always provide a quiet, low-sensory space to support attendee comfort and participation).
- Ask about dietary restrictions and preferences if food will be served

Engaging Attendees

Plan activities that:

- Are modified if necessary to be inclusive of any physical, sensory and cognitive needs disclosed in the event registration whilst encouraging sustainable practices, such as workshops on up-cycling or guided nature walks.
- Educate on the event's sustainability efforts and encourage eco-friendly participation
- Use materials that are designed to be accessible, including braille, large print or screen-readable digital formats. Also ensure they are reusable, or paper-based and recyclable to minimise waste.
- Regularly collect feedback to identify barriers and make improvements.

Moving to paper-free systems is a positive step for sustainability but must be inclusive with the help of platforms like:

- Accessible Form Builders:
 - Microsoft Forms: Designed to meet accessibility standards and works with screen readers.
 - JotForm: Offers accessible templates with WCAG 2.1 compliance.
- Accessibility testing tools:
 - WAVE: Free web accessibility evaluation tool.
 - AXE by Deque: Browser extension for auditing accessibility issues.
 - Microsoft Word documents that have gone through the Microsoft Word accessibility checker.

Paper-free and accessible resources

- E-Ink tablets: Provide devices like the Remarkable Tablet for sustainable, paper-like digital note-taking and form filling.
- Interactive Kiosks: Install user-friendly kiosks with accessibility features in key locations.
- Printing of navigational signage: Have a set of reusable signs (with dates and event specifics omitted) for wayfinding.
- QR Codes with inclusive links: Use QR codes to direct attendees to accessible online content.

QR codes may be inaccessible to those with vision impairments so consider using one of these alternatives (selected based on the accessibility needs of your attendees):

- Ensure the QR code is formatted with high contrast ([WebAIM](#)).
- Short URLs: Providing short, easy-to-type URLs alongside QR codes ensures that users who cannot scan the codes still have a way to access the content. These URLs can be read aloud by screen readers, making them accessible to visually impaired users. Alternatively, use a hyperlink with meaningful text (e.g. [Google Search](#) rather than 'Click here')
- NFC (Near Field Communication) Tags: NFC tags allow users to access information simply by tapping their device on the tag.
- Braille and Tactile Signage: Including braille and tactile information alongside QR codes can help visually impaired individuals locate and understand the context of the codes. Tactile indicators can guide users to the QR code's location.
- SMS and email links: Providing information via SMS or email links can be a straightforward alternative. Users can receive a message with a link that directs them to the desired content without needing to scan a QR code.
- [Accessible Web Design](#): Ensure that the websites attendees are being directed to are accessible and if not, summarise the information on a Microsoft Word document that has gone through the Word accessibility checker.

On the day considerations

- Ensure clear paths inside and outside the venue.
- Remove obstacles and trip hazards in the venue and its surroundings.
- Provide ample space and seating options for mobility aid users.
- Keep all non-automatic doors open.
- Use clear signage, including for accessible entrances.
- Reserve front seats for individuals with hearing impairments.

Catering and Waste Management

When organising catering:

- Offer inclusive menu options for various dietary needs and restrictions, with clear labelling. To make it more sustainable ensure at least 80% of the menu is vegetarian or even better, make it 100%.
- Feature sustainable practices, such as sourcing local, organic and plant-based foods and using reusable or compostable serviceware.
- Ensure table heights cater for mobility aid users and allow easy access to catering.
- Clearly label food items (e.g., vegetarian, gluten-free, halal) using either reusable labels, wipeable chalk boards or seeded paper.
- Encourage attendees to bring reusable water bottles and coffee cups



Current State	Sustainable and accessible alternative	Options
Pre-packaged food	- Request caterers to provide reusable containers for food or supply pre-washed, sanitised containers for attendees to package items themselves. - Opt for pre-portioned servings in reusable containers that can be picked up from a central station, reducing waste and ensuring hygiene.	<u>returnr</u>
Sharing stations	- Designate a separate section for immunocompromised attendees whilst still prioritising reusable options. - Provide individual reusable tongs and serving tools to minimise cross-contamination. - Offer personalised reusable kits containing utensils, napkins and straws for attendees. - Set up widely accessible hand sanitising stations near food distribution areas to promote hygiene. - Arrange small group sharing stations with items divided into smaller portions, limiting interaction with shared setups.	Purchase a set of reusable tongs and serving tools for events
Single-use utensils	- Prioritise reusable utensils made from durable materials such as stainless steel, bamboo or silicone. - Ensure reusable items are cleaned and handled hygienically between uses. - Provide lightweight or adaptive utensil options to support attendees with different accessibility needs.	<u>Knork Eco Friendly.</u>
Plastic Straws	- Flexible silicone straws: Soft, bendable, and reusable. - Stainless steel straws with silicone tips: Durable and comfortable with a soft tip. - Paper straws: Compostable but less suitable for extended use or hot beverages.	<u>Bamboo straws</u> <u>Topple Tray</u>

WANT FORMAL RECOGNITION?

ACTS Sustainable Event Certification independently verifies your sustainability actions through evidence review and audit.



Whether you're hosting a conference, workshop, or seminar, our step-by-step toolkit will support you to reduce environmental impact, enhance inclusivity, and track your progress as you plan your event.

[Register your next event here](#) or [learn more!](#)



acts.au



info@acts.asn.au