

OUR GIFT TO THE PLANET  
EARTH DAY 2020  
SECOND EDITION

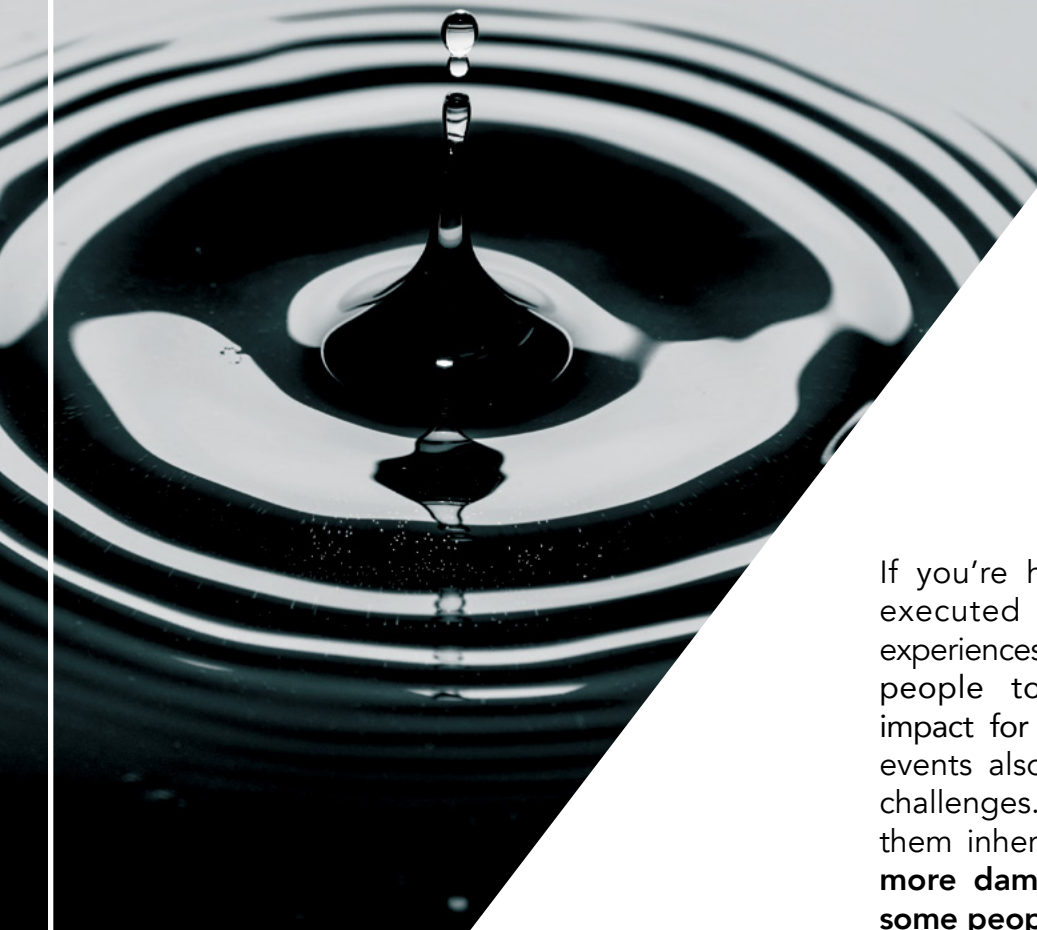
# ELEVATING EVENT SUSTAINABILITY

A GUIDE TO IMPROVING YOUR EVENT'S ENVIRONMENTAL & COMMUNITY IMPACTS



 ASCENDANCE  
SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

# EVENTS CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING



If you're here, you know that properly executed events can foster magical experiences. They have the power to bring people together and create positive impact for entire communities. That said, events also come with their own unique challenges. Their temporary nature makes them inherently wasteful, **at times doing more damage in just a few hours than some people do in their lifetimes.**

Like everything in the universe, positive or negative actions have a **ripple effect** on local communities and the planet as a whole. This guide will lead you through the initial steps of using the magic of your event to kickstart a chain reaction of positivity. You'll learn some of our best tips for preventing pollution, reducing waste, protecting natural habitats and managing natural resources, while engaging and protecting your community.

# LET'S TALK SUSTAINABILITY

At Ascendance, we define sustainability as **our ability to maintain something long-term that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future.** In the events world, this means that your event can exist in a way that is good to our communities and our planet, while still being profitable and fun! Recent events have

shown us that when we take a step back and allow the planet to breathe, it can in fact heal. We hope event organizers take this time to re-strategize operations so that both our planet and our people can return to enjoying events in a way that is sustainable, healthy and fun for us all.



## INTEGRITY ABOVE ALL

If you only take one thing away from this guide, let it be this - **Integrity is THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT element of any sustainability program.** This means if you say you're going to do something sustainable, we beg you to execute as promised.

People and communities are starting to notice when brands falsely market themselves as sustainable. We call it "greenwashing" and trust us, this is one behavior you don't want to be guilty of.

While some do this intentionally, in many cases, it happens by accident. Taking on more than you should or are able to can result in programs failing or, worse yet, generating other negative impacts. Even if you only invest time and resources into one sustainability initiative – if it is implemented correctly, it's a win for your event, your community and the planet!



# FROM PARTY THROWERS TO PARTY GOERS

While event organizers do most of the decision making when it comes to an event's environmental impact, **event attendees have the power to help too.** From birthday parties to music festivals, you can lessen your own impact at any event in the easiest ways.

- △ Bring your own reusable water bottle or cup, if allowed.
- △ Reuse disposable cups (if it's safe!) and refuse straws and napkins.
- △ Talk to your bartender about only distributing straws and napkins when people ask for them.
- △ NEVER litter... and if you see litter, lead by example and pick it up.
- △ Ditch the glitter and any other accessory or apparel that can become litter.
- △ Bring a pocket ashtray for cigarette butts.
- △ If recycling or composting is available, carefully read signs to make sure you are depositing materials in the appropriate bins.
- △ Use public transport or a bike to travel to and from the event.
- △ If air travel is needed, offset your carbon footprint or choose a train instead!
- △ If available, choose vegan, organic and/ or locally sourced food.

## **MOST IMPORTANTLY... CREATE DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY!**

As an event attendee, you can tell your favorite events that sustainability is important to you. Just message or comment on their social media pages or send them an email about what you hope to see at their next event. Feel free to send this guide too. **They are listening now more than ever!**

# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

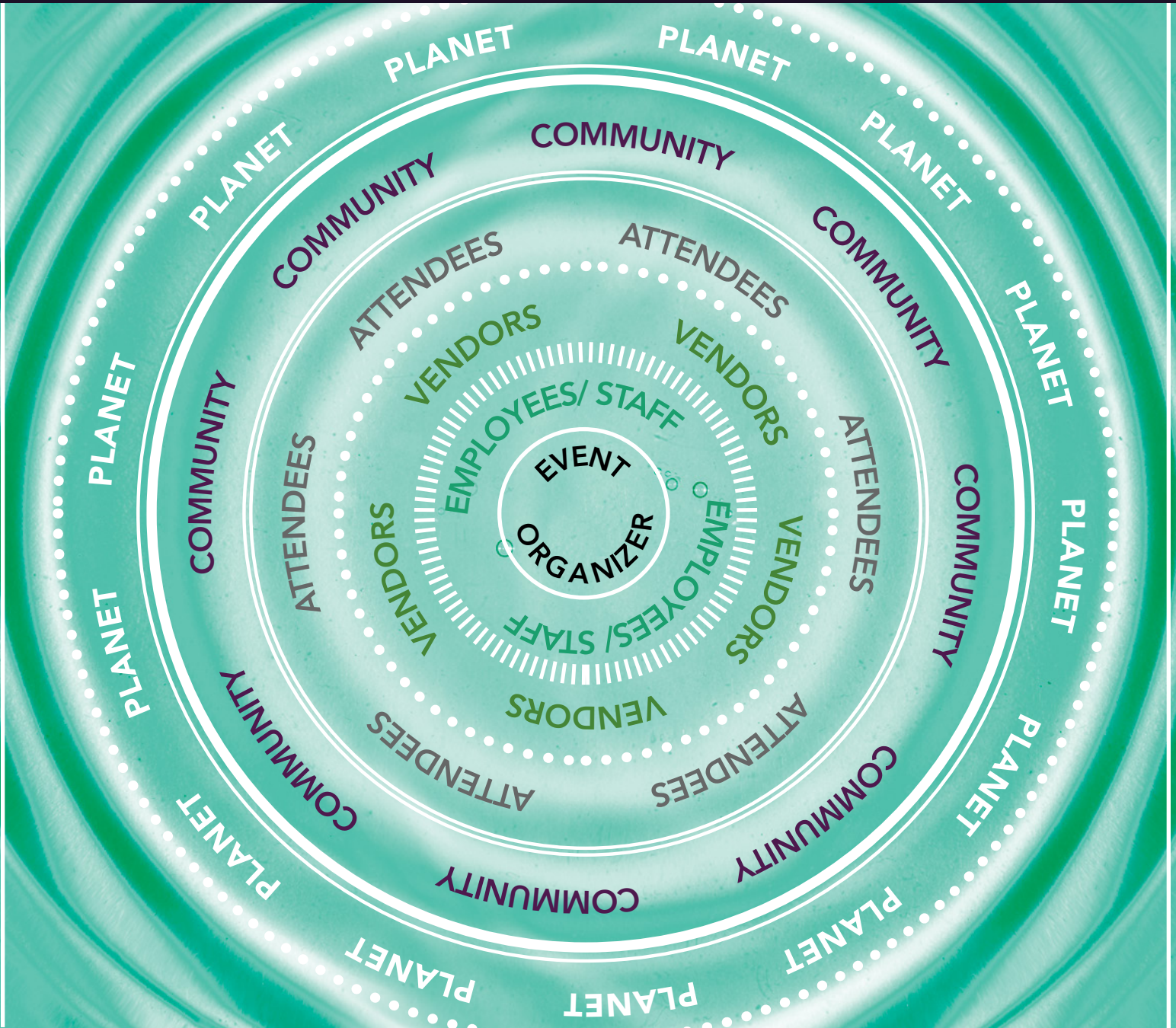
FOR EVENT ORGANIZERS

Event organizers have the ability to either positively or negatively impact their communities and our planet. You get to choose:

| NEGATIVE IMPACT                                | POSITIVE IMPACT                         |
|--|---|
| Enable pollution                               | Prevent pollution                       |
| Create unnecessary waste                       | Reduce waste                            |
| Damage natural habitats                        | Protect natural habitats                |
| Overly deplete natural resources               | Responsibly utilize natural resources   |
| Condone unconscious behavior                   | Educate attendees on conscious behavior |
| Jeopardize your reputation and relationships   | Take ownership, engaging your community |
| Encourage other events to behave irresponsibly | Lead by example for other events        |

**NEXT STEPS:** Go beyond sustainability and make your event regenerative by leaving the environment even better than before.

# WHAT WILL YOUR RIPPLE LOOK LIKE?



## POSITIVE RIPPLE

- △ **EVENT ORGANIZER:** Adopts sustainable values, directing their team to do the same.
- △ **EMPLOYEES/ STAFF:** Enact new values into operations, initiatives and vendor trainings.
- △ **VENDORS:** Align with values, learning and enacting new sustainable strategies.
- △ **ATTENDEES:** Observe and participate in sustainability initiatives, learning new behaviors.
- △ **COMMUNITY:** All above carry learnings beyond the event, sharing with their community. Community learns and appreciates event efforts. Expectations for other events heighten.
- △ **PLANET:** Environmental responsibility and ownership are heightened, shifting the community's behavior impacting the environment.

# WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

... Besides being good to the planet you mean? ;) There are lots of marketing, financial and community benefits!

## MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

- △ **GROW BRAND EQUITY:** Boost your brand's reputation and recognition.
- △ **GROW YOUR CONTENT OFFERING:** Sustainability initiatives create positive, year-round content for all your online and social platforms.
- △ **GROW YOUR AUDIENCE & ENGAGEMENT:** Tap into a new market of environmental stewards that may not have heard of your event or may get more excited about it.
- △ **GROW YOUR PARTNERSHIPS:** Attract potential partners and sponsors with similar missions of protecting the planet.

## COST SAVING OPPORTUNITIES

- △ **WASTE MANAGEMENT:** Reduce costs on cleaning crews and waste haulers by getting to the root of the problem - prevent pollution and reduce waste!
- △ **UTILITIES:** Save money on water, electricity, generators and fuel by reduction of consumption and using natural resources more efficiently.

## REVENUE GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES

- △ **SPONSORSHIPS:** Engage brands looking for opportunities to activate their own Corporate Social Responsibility goals. Just be sure to pitch them well in advance!
- △ **MERCHANDISE:** Sell sustainable souvenirs to create additional revenue streams! Certain items can be incentives or even mandatory as part of waste reduction programs.
- △ **TICKET PRICE INCREASES:** Research shows that 73% of millennials are willing to pay more for sustainable products and services. Establishing yourself as a mission-driven brand attracts attendees that are willing to pay more to attend your event.

## COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES

- △ **INCREASED EVENTS AND TOUCH POINTS:** Engage the community in environmental efforts like beach cleanups, tree plantings or community garden projects.
- △ **INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP & SHARED RESPONSIBILITY:** Be the leader of a movement for other events and community partners to join, instilling a sense of ownership and that allows everyone to share the load of taking care of their community.



## EVIDENCE OF WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

BRANDED SUSTAINABLE ITEMS CAN BE SOLD **FOR A PROFIT**, WHILE REDUCING WASTE AND OFFERING BENEFITS TO ATTENDEES.

- ◀ Ascendancy Partner, Rakastella Music Festival offers attendees a free shot when they buy souvenir reusable cups.

## WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

**OUR PLANET IS IN TROUBLE AND SO ARE OUR OWN COMMUNITIES.**

The climate is changing just as fast as our landfills are filling.  
Our oceans are full of plastic putting our waters, food supplies and tourism at risk.  
Our forests are being chopped down faster than we can get paper products back into stores.  
Polluted air makes us more vulnerable to the very diseases we are running from.

### **THE IMBALANCE AFFECTS US ALL.**

We urgently need to protect our natural resources for our health, our livelihood, and the enjoyment of future generations.



### **YOUR LEADERSHIP HAS AN IMPACT:**

- △ Events serve as a training ground for how vendors, staff and attendees will treat the environment moving forward.
- △ Events can also act as prototypes for how cities can operate sustainably... what can you teach your city about how it manages itself?



# WHY NOW?

**THE LONGER YOU WAIT,  
THE MORE IT WILL COST  
YOU AND THE PLANET!**

Beyond that, our planet is having the best rest it has ever received from human activity in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a good time for event organizers to think about how we can not only step lightly back on to the planet, but how we can best harness and grow new awareness and action around sustainability.

## RISKS: HOW IT CAN COST YOU

△ **BRAND EQUITY:** Beyond environmental activists, sustainability is swiftly becoming a priority for event attendees and local decision-makers. Make sure your brand is on the right side of the equation!

△ **LEGISLATION IS COMING:** Bans on styrofoam and single-use plastics are popping up across the country. If your event doesn't proactively implement sustainable solutions that make sense for over time, being caught off-guard by new legislation will inevitably force you to figure it out quickly and potentially fail, at a cost:

- Legal trouble or fines
- Operational issues
- Customer service issues

△ **VENUE AND COMMUNITY BACKLASH:** Events that negatively impact their communities risk losing their venues and permits. Sometimes, it only takes a few angry neighbors to ruin the fun for everyone!

# HOW IT WILL COST THE PLANET

## THE LONGER WE WAIT, THE MORE IMPACT WE MAKE

Every day we operate unsustainably, we have a negative impact on the planet. Every time we say "maybe next time" is measurably detrimental in terms of pollution, landfill waste, carbon emissions and more.

- △ While your event may only happen once in a while, your partners and vendors likely have year-long operations that create negative impacts on a daily basis. You have the opportunity to create rules that could shift the way they operate moving forward, having exponential benefits for the planet.
- △ The same is true for your attendees: every event that does not incorporate sustainability is a missed opportunity to educate them on how to live more eco-consciously.

## HOW WE CAN CHANGE COURSE

### △ UTILIZING THE GLOBAL RESET TO RESTRATEGIZE:

In our time spent on lock-down, we've been forced to change our ways and seen the earth recover in no time, but will we conveniently forget as soon as we are set free? However long it takes, we know human beings will find a way to come together again - and when they do? Oh man, we will have quite a few big parties on our hands.

What if events could use this time to reset their strategies so that they could help us all step lightly back on the planet together? Let's not let this global reset go to waste. Let's do what we can while we have the time. Sustainability has never been more important... for us and for our planet.

### △ MAKING THE COMMON GOOD A PRIORITY:

We are living in a time of stark consequences for not prioritizing a responsibility to those outside ourselves. The more we look out for our attendees and community, the more we all win. Let's commit to taking better care of ourselves, each other and the planet.

IMAGINE  
THE  
CELEBRATIONS  
AHEAD!

# KEY WAYS YOUR EVENT CAN BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE



## PREVENTING POLLUTION

### OPPORTUNITY

Pollution can be prevented before, during and after your event by educating vendors and attendees in a way that changes behavior moving forward. Beyond this, the event must take full responsibility for its cleanup by closely overseeing vendors and cleaning crew during load-out.

### TIPS

- △ Create bans against using certain items such as styrofoam, confetti, glitter or balloons, utilizing the opportunity to educate on how these materials can easily become litter and marine debris.
- △ Hire a reliable cleaning company.
- △ Communicate attendee expectations before the event via email and/ or social media.
- △ Have visible signage throughout the event reiterating the importance of not littering.



## WASTE REDUCTION

### OPPORTUNITY

REDUCE. Reuse. Recycle.

There's a reason why those 3 words are always stated in that order. Reduction is king. Always try eliminating waste at its source or finding a way to reuse it prior to resorting to recycling as there are unique challenges and significant carbon emissions that could result from recycling.

Recycling and composting are delicate processes that require significant diligence to guarantee success. There is also an opportunity to extend your reach beyond attendees and engage your vendors and staff in proper reducing, reusing and recycling.

### TIPS

- △ Think about the kinds of waste your event creates. Ask yourself: what fills our trash cans and dumpsters?
- △ Find reusable solutions or ways to repurpose these items.
- △ Avoid single-use items as much as possible, but if you must use single-use, make sure the items are recyclable or compostable by your local facilities.
- △ Be sure to consult your local recycling and composting facilities about how to properly separate these waste streams. These instructions must be visibly posted for attendees, and your cleaning company must also be trained on how to properly process this waste so that it is not rejected by the facility.



## NATURE CONSERVATION

### OPPORTUNITY

Engage with your audience and your team outside of your main event with activities like beach clean ups, tree plantings and environmental restoration projects.

### TIPS

- △ If your event takes place at an outdoor venue, take the time to consult a local naturalist to see if there are unique natural elements you can help protect or restore.
- △ Even if your event takes place indoors, choose an environmental cause that your team and attendees can engage with such as ocean conservation, reforestation or wildlife protection.



## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### OPPORTUNITY

Natural resources, including energy, water and food, should be used as efficiently as possible. Energy production and transportation both impact our atmosphere due to carbon emissions.

Realizing that many event supplies are made with raw materials that come from the earth, also brings responsible procurement into focus under this category. Everything from merchandise and signage to staging can all be made of natural materials such as wood or cotton, so it's important to take their sourcing, distribution and disposal into consideration.

### TIPS

- △ Always select ground power or renewable energy (like solar power or biofuels) over regular diesel generators.
- △ Encourage attendees to use public transport, trains or carpooling to cut emissions from travel.
- △ After you've reduced unnecessary carbon emissions, consider an offsetting program (like tree planting!) to reduce the rest.
- △ Choose local, organic food when possible and donate unsold food to local charities. You can also compost food scraps to eliminate food waste!
- △ Check your wood, paper and merchandise providers for sustainability certifications or sustainable sourcing values.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### OPPORTUNITY

Communication education that is created in alignment with your brand and sustainability mission has the greatest possibility for impact within your audience, community and beyond.

Creating community partnerships can also provide opportunities to support one another on environmental initiatives.

### TIPS

- △ Involve your marketing team. Those responsible for creating your brand as it stands today, should be the ones developing the look and feel of your sustainability messaging in order to engage attendees with familiar imagery and voice.
- △ Assign a member of your team who cares about the environment as your sustainability champion to assist in engaging internal team members and external partners.
- △ Find a local non-profit organization that aligns with your sustainability mission to become an event partner.



## + A NEW NEED - PUBLIC HEALTH

### OPPORTUNITY

A healthy planet should have healthy humans on it! In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, make sure your event provides its attendees with proper equipment and supplies to safeguard public health.

Check with your local, state and/ or country health departments for guidance, but also try your best to go above and beyond what is required in order to be sure your attendees, vendors, staff and community are safe!


### TIPS

- △ Provide hand washing stations and make sure soap and water is always well-stocked.
- △ Provide hand sanitizing stations where soap and water cannot be provided and keep these well-stocked.
- △ Sell hand sanitizer at merchandise stations.
- △ Communicate availability and locations of all public health initiatives to attendees.
- △ Encourage attendees who become ill prior to the event to stay home by offering refunds or ticket resale programs.

## HOW TO RESTART NOW

There's so much more where that came from, but start wherever you're at. We've been given the gift of time to re-think how we'll operate in the future, so use it wisely now! Start by focusing on just one or two areas. If you've never done this before, pollution prevention and/ or waste reduction are usually the best places to start.


Next, assign a person or bring someone on to help. [We're only an email away at Ascendance](#), if you need us! Then, can craft your mission and vision, strategize and start communicating with both with your internal teams and external audience. Remember to always be honest with yourself and your community about what sustainability initiatives you can confidently take on!

  
Assign a  
Human

  
Mission  
& Vision

  
Strategize

  
Communicate  
& Educate

  
Execute  
& Audit

  
Report

Finally, it's time to execute! Make sure to take in-depth notes on your wins and key learnings to set yourself up for success next time! Be sure to also report your findings to your internal team and your community in order to celebrate your wins and set new goals.

**WHILE TAKING ON SUSTAINABILITY MAY NOT BE EASY, IT WILL ALWAYS BE WORTH IT!**

Strive for progress, not perfection.

Any step towards sustainability is a step in the right direction!

**YOU'VE GOT THIS!**

A B O U T



**EVENTS CAN HELP SAVE THE PLANET.  
WE SHOW THEM HOW.**

We've helped events large and small turn  
negative impacts into positive ones.

**IT'S NOT EASY TO DO IT ALONE.**

We're here to help.

**BRING US ON**

to assist your team

Answer just a few questions and we'll give you a call.

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# HOW ASCENDANCE CAN HELP

GREENYOUREVENT.COM

## INITIATIVE STRATEGY + OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES:

- △ **Identifying which sustainability initiatives are possible** and will have the highest impact for your goals and your budget.
- △ **Guiding you on how best to implement initiatives** in ways that make the most operational sense for your event.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT + LOGISTICS

- △ **Need support making all of the above actually happen?** No problem. We'll become your remote Sustainability Managers. Just ask!

## SUSTAINABILITY CAMPAIGN CREATION AND EXECUTION + COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- △ **Creating marketing content that is honest and aligned** with your brand to maximize impact.
- △ **Bringing your campaign to life before, during and after your event** with experiential activations.

## BRAND REPUTATION PROTECTION

- △ **Ensuring authenticity** and avoiding green washing when selecting products and processes.
- △ **Assuring integrity.** We hold ourselves and our events accountable to the highest standards, doing whatever it takes to assist your team in executing all initiatives as promised.

## SECURING PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

- △ **Connecting you with the right vendors and community partners** to support your program.
- △ **Researching,** pitching and developing potential sponsor relationships.
- △ **Finding the right carbon offsetting** program to participate in.

## EDUCATION

- △ **Creating engaging education campaigns** that raise environmental awareness through experiential learning.
- △ **Training employees, partners, vendors and event staff** on the importance of your sustainability initiatives and how to support in properly executing them.

## REPORTING

- △ **Developing audit processes** for tracking initiatives and making continuous progress.
- △ **Analyzing results** so that you can publicly celebrate your wins while applying your learnings.

## WANT OUR HELP?

**BRING US ON**  
to assist your team

Answer just a few questions  
and we'll give you a call.

GREENYOUREVENT.COM

# ASCENDANCE

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

was founded by Vivian Belzaguy,  
who has a passion for utilizing events  
as a platform for much-needed social change.

After 13 years in the events industry, she grew tired of seeing large events create more waste in a few hours than she felt she could in her lifetime. She has since executed sustainability programs for venues and events with up to 50,000 attendees, becoming part of the shift that will teach the world how to take better care of our planet.

*Dear Readers.*

My team and I created this guide in hopes of sending a positive ripple out into the world of events. We know it's desperately needed right now.

Hang in there! We'll be back... and better than ever!

*With so much love.*  
*Viv*



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