Sustainable Events Management: ISO 20121, Carbon Footprint and Legacy

16 – 20 November 2026
Amsterdam - Zuidas business district hotel



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Introduction:

Sustainable events management is now expected by sponsors, host venues, athletes and attendees, yet many conferences, exhibitions and sports events still discover their waste volumes, energy use and travel emissions only after the gates close, then publish green claims they cannot evidence. This Core Concept course gives organising, venue and sustainability teams a working method: an ISO 20121 event sustainability management system at overview level, issue and stakeholder mapping, procurement criteria, operational controls and footprint measurement. Participants produce a Sustainable Event Plan with a carbon footprint estimate for a case event.

Course Objectives:

- Identify an event's material environmental, social and economic issues and rank them with stakeholders using an issue register and priority matrix
- Structure an event sustainability management system on the ISO 20121 elements of context, policy, objectives, roles, operational control and review
- Write sustainability criteria into venue, supplier, catering and contractor tenders and score bids against them
- Plan waste, materials, energy, water and food controls that cut resource use across build, live and breakdown phases
- Estimate an event carbon footprint from activity data and emission factors, treating attendee and fan travel as a separate hotspot
- Report sustainability results and legacy outcomes with evidence and screen public claims for greenwashing risk

Target Audience:

- Managers responsible for planning conferences, exhibitions, festivals and corporate events who must meet client or sponsor sustainability requirements
- Venue managers accountable for the energy, water, waste and accessibility performance of arenas, exhibition halls and conference centres
- Sports event and tournament operations managers who plan fan travel, temporary overlay and host community programmes
- Sustainability and ESG managers asked to set targets, collect data and report on events their organisation hosts or sponsors
- Procurement managers who tender venues, caterers, production suppliers and logistics contractors for events

Course Outline:

Day 1: Event Sustainability Foundations and Issue Mapping

- Event Sustainability Business Case: Sponsor, Host and Attendee Expectations
- Environmental, Social and Economic Impact Categories Across the Event Lifecycle
- Sustainability Issue Register for Build, Live and Breakdown Phases
- Stakeholder Engagement Map: Host Community, Athletes, Exhibitors and Suppliers
- Current-State Sustainability Baseline Self-Assessment for a Recent Event

Day 2: ISO 20121 Event Sustainability Management System

- ISO 20121 Structure: Context, Leadership, Planning, Support, Operation and Improvement
- Event Sustainability Policy, Objectives and Target Setting Worksheet
- Roles, Competence and Supply Chain Communication Requirements
- Operational Control, Monitoring and Management Review Cycle
- Scope Boundary Decisions: Single Event, Event Series or Venue Portfolio

Day 3: Sustainable Procurement and Resource Controls

- Venue Selection Scorecard: Transit Access, Energy Performance and Step-Free Access
- Supplier Sustainability Criteria in Tenders for Production, Catering and Logistics
- Waste Hierarchy Plan: Reusable Build Materials, Signage and Circular Stand Design
- Energy and Water Controls: Grid Connection versus Temporary Generators and Sub-Metering
- Sustainable Catering Menu Criteria, Food Donation and Food Waste Tracking

Day 4: Travel, Inclusion, Sports Overlay and Carbon Footprint

- Attendee and Fan Travel Survey Design and Low-Carbon Transport Options
- Accessibility and Social Inclusion Checklist for Venues, Ticketing and Programmes
- Sports Event Temporary Overlay: Reuse, Hire-Back and Dismantling Planning
- Event Carbon Footprint Method: Activity Data, Emission Factors and Scope Boundaries
- Community Legacy Plan and Greenwashing Risk Review of Sustainability Claims

Day 5: Capstone: Sustainable Event Plan and Footprint Estimate

- Case Event Briefing: Multi-Day Exhibition with a Sports Side Programme
- Exercise: Issue Register and Sustainability Objectives for the Case Event
- Exercise: Carbon Footprint Estimate Model with Travel, Energy and Catering Hotspots
- Exercise: Evidence-Based Sustainability Report Outline Referencing GRI Guidelines
- Sustainable Event Plan Presentation and Peer Challenge Panel

Skills You Will Gain:

- Event Sustainability Issue Mapping
- Management System Design
- Sustainable Event Procurement
- Circular Materials Planning
- Event Carbon Accounting
- Fan and Attendee Travel Analysis
- Accessibility and Inclusion Planning
- Evidence-Based Sustainability Reporting

Why Attend This Course:

- Leave with a Sustainable Event Plan and carbon footprint estimate for a case event, ready to adapt to your next conference, exhibition or tournament
- Answer sponsor, host venue and client sustainability questionnaires with data rather than assertions
- Spot claims in event communications that would not survive challenge before they are published
- Compare approaches with organisers, venue operators and sustainability specialists from sports, business events and public programmes

Conclusion:

Sustainable events are decided at the tender table and in the travel plan long before the stage is built. The course moves from the business case and issue mapping, through an ISO 20121 management system at overview level, to procurement criteria and operational controls for waste, materials, energy, water and catering, then to travel, accessibility, sports overlay, legacy and carbon footprint measurement. The final day applies the method to a case event and produces a Sustainable Event Plan with a footprint estimate and a reporting outline that avoids greenwashing.