



## Hierarchy of Sustainable Event Actions (as mentioned on Episode #20 of the *Ignite Your Events Podcast*)

Sustainability in events doesn't come down to one big decision—it's the result of many small, intentional choices that add up over time. The following areas are ranked by both their overall impact and the ability for planners to effect meaningful change—highlighting where focused efforts can make the biggest difference in reducing footprint, managing costs and creating more responsible, future-focused experiences.

**1. Food Waste:** Reducing food waste lowers landfill contributions and greenhouse gas emissions while improving cost efficiency—through better forecasting, smaller batch service and donation programs. Composting reduces food emissions from the waste, but let's use that food first!

**2. Protein Choice:** Shifting toward more plant-based proteins significantly reduces an event's carbon footprint, as meat and dairy production require more water, land and energy—and generate high levels of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Cattle is problematic due to their methane emissions—which are the most harmful of the climate change gases.

**3. Beverages:** Choosing local, and low-waste beverage options—such as bulk service over single-use packaging—cuts down on transportation emissions and waste. The weight of shipping glass bottles across oceans means a high carbon footprint—so drink local!

**4. Transportation:** Encouraging public transit, walkable venues and fewer miles traveled reduces the largest source of event-related emissions: attendee and supplier transportation. It also saves time and usually cost as transportation is expensive.

**5. Materials:** Reducing materials altogether—by choosing not to produce unnecessary signage, swag or printed items—along with prioritizing reusable options, minimizes waste and supports a more circular approach to event design.

**6. Individual Choices:** Your choices matter and empowering attendees to make sustainable decisions (like opting for vegetarian options as a default and providing information on low-impact options) creates collective impact and reinforces a culture of sustainability. When we make a sustainable choice, we give license to others to make a sustainable choice.

*A special thank you to Natalie Lowe and The Sustainable Events Forum for sharing this PDF with Ignite podcast listeners and subscribers. [tsef.ca](http://tsef.ca)*