



INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

A SERIES OF PRACTICAL GUIDES
FOR THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY



SUSTAINABILITY ESSENTIALS

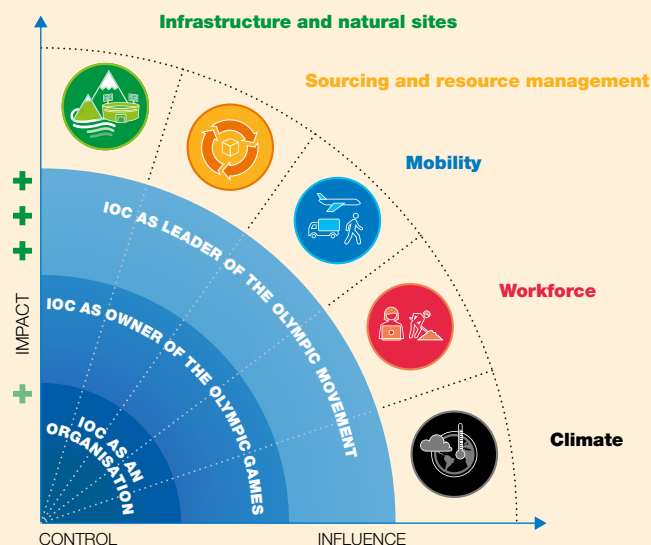
Sustainability is one of the most pressing challenges of our time across a wide spectrum of social, environmental and economic matters. Major issues such as climate change, economic inequality and social injustice are affecting people throughout the world. These are also pressing concerns for the sports community, both for managing its day-to-day affairs and for its responsibilities towards young people and future generations. We also recognise that sport has an unrivalled capacity to motivate and inspire large numbers of people. This is why we believe that the Olympic Movement has both a duty and an opportunity to contribute actively to global sustainability in line with our vision: “Building a better world through sport”.

It is therefore logical that sustainability forms one of the key elements of Olympic Agenda 2020, the Olympic Movement’s strategic roadmap adopted in December 2014. In particular, this defined our approach to sustainability across the IOC’s three spheres of responsibility:

- **The IOC as an organisation:** To embrace sustainability principles and to include sustainability in its day-to-day operations.
- **The IOC as owner of the Olympic Games:** To take a proactive and leadership role on sustainability and ensure that it is included in all aspects of the planning and staging of the Olympic Games.
- **The IOC as leader of the Olympic Movement:** To engage and assist Olympic Movement stakeholders in integrating sustainability within their own organisations and operations.

Following on from Olympic Agenda 2020, we issued the IOC Sustainability Strategy in December 2016. The Strategy is based on our three spheres of responsibility and five focus areas, as illustrated below.

The IOC Sustainability Strategy framework is illustrated below:





The Strategy sets out a number of actions in our capacity as leader of the Olympic Movement. Among these is a commitment to develop common guidelines, methodologies and tools for National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs). Further information can be found at <https://www.olympic.org/sustainability>.

The “Sustainability Essentials” series of guides is the first concrete outcome of this commitment. These guides aim to provide simple, practical and essential information on key aspects of sustainability for NOCs and IFs to be better able to navigate the complexities of this subject and develop effective sustainability programmes. Whether your organisation is just starting out, or is already actively engaged in sustainability, we hope these guides will provide a valuable overview and reference point for this important topic.

FEEDBACK

We hope that our “Sustainability Essentials” guides will provide a valuable basis for understanding sustainability. We also know that sustainability is a constantly evolving discipline, with new issues, challenges and opportunities always needing to be addressed. We therefore welcome feedback, comments and suggestions so that we can continually improve our guidance and ensure our material is as fresh, relevant and accurate as possible. If you have any comments, please contact us in any language at: sustainability@olympic.org

PRINTING

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

This is the introductory guide to our “Sustainability Essentials” series. Our aim here is to provide a general understanding of sustainability: what it means, why it is important, how it relates to sport and what your organisation can do to be part of this critical endeavour.

We have compiled this general overview of sustainability as we believe it is essential for National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Sports Federations (IFs) – indeed any sports organisation – to have a basic understanding of how sustainability is relevant to sport, and how to go about developing an effective sustainability programme that also leaves lasting legacies.

There are many organisations across the sporting world, large and small, that are already actively engaged in individual aspects of sustainability. Typically, these tend to fall into two separate categories: “greening” initiatives, where the focus is on the environment, and “social responsibility” projects supporting worthy causes in the wider community. These are good things to do, and some

impressive achievements have been made. To learn more about the kinds of initiatives being undertaken, we recommend you read the wide selection of case studies the IOC has published on the sustainability projects of IFs: <https://www.olympic.org/sustainability>.

True sustainability, however, goes much further than individual projects. It is about looking closely at what you do as an organisation, the way you interact with society at large, and ensuring you have appropriate governance structures, policies and processes in place that will secure your long-term future for the benefit of your organisation, society and the environment.

All environmental and social initiatives need to be seen in this context and embedded in sport’s core activities, not as “nice-to-have” add-ons that ignore sport’s actual impacts. True sustainability offers indisputable value, from cost savings and risk management to improved stakeholder relations and public credibility.

TRUE SUSTAINABILITY OFFERS INDISPUTABLE
VALUE, FROM COST SAVINGS AND RISK
MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVED STAKEHOLDER
RELATIONS AND PUBLIC CREDIBILITY



WHAT WE MEAN BY SUSTAINABILITY

There are many formal definitions of sustainability with variants on the theme of a balanced approach to environmental, social and economic aspects, providing for both present and future needs. This is very much the sense in which the UN recognises sustainable development.

The IOC's official definition of sustainability is that, when making decisions, we ensure feasibility, and we seek to maximise positive impact and minimise negative impact in the social, economic and environmental spheres.

In practice, sustainability is about how you work and make decisions. It is as much about the culture of an organisation as it is about technical aspects. We believe an organisation can begin to achieve its vision and goals only if it fully integrates sustainability principles and practices into day-to-day operations, so that these become part and parcel of how people think and behave.

The goal for any organisation should be to maximise positive benefits while at the same time avoiding or minimising negative impacts on people and the environment. To turn such

aspirations into reality means being prepared to consider the consequences of decisions. In turn, that means having all the relevant information available to help inform such decisions.

Ultimately, therefore, sustainability is about finding better ways of doing things and taking the time to make well-informed long-term choices. Sometimes this means challenging established ways of doing things and rejecting old thinking. An organisation that is truly committed to sustainability is one that makes the effort to understand its choices, to account for them and to learn from them.

A common misrepresentation is when people speak of "environmental sustainability", "social sustainability" or "economic sustainability" as separate disciplines. True sustainability requires an integrated and holistic approach; it cannot be segregated into component parts. For example, climate change may be viewed as an environmental phenomenon, but its impacts affect society and economies at many levels. Measures to mitigate or adapt to climate change are therefore necessarily relevant to sustainability in its full sense.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

These two terms are often confused and used interchangeably. While there is some overlap, they in fact cover distinctly different approaches.

Sustainability encapsulates a long-term and future-facing purpose; it is about what we want to achieve and ensure we do not over-exploit resources to the extent that we diminish the quality of life of future generations.

In contrast, CSR tends to focus on

addressing current stakeholder issues. Many organisations do good things, such as making charitable donations that relieve social problems. These are certainly responsible things to do, but they are not sustainable if they do not tackle the underlying issue.

In essence, therefore, CSR mostly addresses issues by means of compensatory good cause activities, whereas sustainability is concerned with one's direct impacts and their causes.



SOME KEY TRUTHS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

It is important to dispel some common misperceptions about sustainability, because we want all Olympic Movement organisations to feel comfortable talking about and implementing sustainability.

MORE THAN GREEN

Often people think that sustainability is just about the environment. Of course, protecting the environment is an essential part of sustainability; but it is also about the way we treat people and adopt responsible practices.

SUSTAINABILITY IS AFFORDABLE

Many organisations hold back from taking action on sustainability because they fear it will cost too much. In fact, a good sustainability programme should actually save you money. Improved efficiency will lower costs. Sustainable organisations can attract additional sponsorship revenue, and there are unseen benefits in reduced risks and more motivated staff.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE AN EXPERT

People can be afraid to apply sustainability because they are not technical experts. This is not important. So much of sustainability relates to behaviour and ways of working: understanding process rather than having technical knowledge. Where some technical guidance is needed, don't be afraid to ask for help.

SUSTAINABILITY CAN BE PHASED IN

Sometimes people don't start because they don't feel ready to do everything. A fundamental principle of sustainability is continual improvement. Therefore it is perfectly possible to start gradually and steadily build up your programme.

SMALL ACTIONS DO ADD UP

The scale of global challenges like climate change, alleviating poverty or hunger can seem so daunting; how can small, individual actions make a difference? Change does not usually come about through a single decision; it is more typically the result of lots of smaller, incremental actions that collectively shift societal attitudes. Sport is especially important here as it has the power to inspire others, so that your actions can be multiplied many times over.



2

SPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY



SPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Sport is a global passion. In its many and diverse forms, sport enthuses and inspires billions of people across the world. The shared values among the sports community are a powerful basis for mutual understanding, cooperation and peace.

Today, these attributes are ever more precious. The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of social, environmental and economic matters. Major issues such as social injustice, economic inequality and climate change are affecting increasing numbers of people around the world.

Year after year, surveys show that people are increasingly interested in sustainability. There is a growing expectation across society that businesses, institutions and public bodies take more direct responsibility for their environmental, social and ethical performance, as well as their financial results. In an age of increasing scrutiny and open communication through social media, the views of stakeholders – regulators, partners, shareholders, clients, customers, media and the general public – take on a whole new level of significance.

These same opportunities, challenges and expectations apply to the world of sport. From initial concerns over the environmental impact of sports practices, the agenda has

now broadened to cover an array of societal issues, including health and wellbeing, social inclusion, gender equality, governance, accountability, transparency and human rights.

For sport in particular, there is also the recurring theme of “legacy”: the long-term benefits to host communities of building sports infrastructure and staging sports events. Sustainability is what underpins the ability to deliver a lasting, positive legacy.

Above all, however, it is a question of values. Modern Olympism was founded on the fundamental principle of placing sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind. The world of sport cannot stand by, immune and aloof from the global challenges of our time. No matter where you are located, or the size of your organisation, it is important to be aware of these challenges, to understand how they might affect you and to be able to do something about them.

We believe, therefore, that the Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to contribute actively to global sustainability in line with our vision: “Building a better world through sport”.

THE WORLD OF SPORT CANNOT
STAND BY, IMMUNE FROM
AND ALOOF TO THE GLOBAL
CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME



THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND SPORT

In September 2015 at the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit, 193 global leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global charter framed around the five “Ps”: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships.

The 2030 Agenda notably includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new goals call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. This is significant because it shows that sustainability is relevant everywhere; it is not simply the responsibility of richer, developed nations.

The SDGs provide a common framework for governments, businesses and other organisations to explain how they plan to contribute to sustainable development and to tackle the key global sustainability challenges. The SDGs include many aspirations, closely aligned with the

Olympic Movement’s third mission of promoting sport and the Olympic values in society. By further embedding sustainability in our activities and developing partnerships with relevant bodies, we consider that the Olympic Movement can reinforce its contribution to the realisation of these SDGs (see figure below).

Significantly, for its part, the UN General Assembly also confirmed the important role that sport plays in supporting the SDGs. Paragraph 37 of the UN 2030 Agenda states: *“Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognise the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives”.*





THE IOC SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Following the approval of Olympic Agenda 2020, the IOC's strategic roadmap, in December 2014, we initiated an extensive stakeholder consultation during the preparation of our Sustainability Strategy in 2015 and 2016. This included dialogue with a number of IFs and NOCs, commercial partners, NGOs, international institutions, academics and experts. The Strategy was finalised and approved by the IOC's Executive Board in December 2016.

The Strategy sets out how the IOC intends to address sustainability across its three spheres of responsibility: the IOC as an organisation; as owner of the Olympic Games; and as leader of the Olympic Movement, and in line with the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The core of the Strategy is based on five focus areas:

STRATEGIC INTENTS FOR 2030 PER SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS AREA



SOURCING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Sourcing of products and services by organisations within the Olympic Movement, and management of material resources over their lifecycle



INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL SITES

Development and operation of indoor and outdoor sites wherever sports activities take place, including support and administrative infrastructure, such as non-competition venues at the Olympic Games and offices of the Olympic Movement's organisations

SCOPE



MOBILITY

Mobility of people and goods associated with the Olympic Movement's activities, at the local and global scale



WORKFORCE

Working conditions and opportunities offered to employees, volunteers and contractors of the Olympic Movement



CLIMATE

Management of direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Olympic Movement's activities, and adaptation to the consequences of climate change

The five focus areas are strongly inter-related and should be considered as a whole. The first four focus areas relate to things the sports world does: building and operating venues; procuring goods and services and managing resources; moving people and goods; and managing people. The fifth area, climate, is a crosscutting theme, but we believe it is a matter of such critical importance that it requires special attention as a focus area in its own right.

More details on each of our five focus areas can be found in Appendix 1 to this guide, and specific guides on each of these topics are being developed.

Our full Strategy document also has a chapter detailing aspects of corporate governance and the ways in which we manage sustainability within the IOC. This includes sections on management systems, communications and reporting, all of which are essential parts of the day-to-day operation of a sustainability programme.



This structure works for us, and we hope our framework will help others to develop their own sustainability strategies. However, we fully recognise that not all sports organisations are structured in the same way. Your organisation may have different priorities that you need to emphasise in your sustainability strategy or programme.

In many larger organisations, different departments deal specifically with matters that fit under the wider banner of sustainability: these include health and safety, education, community engagement, gender equality, health and peace through sport, social development through sport, diversity, governance and ethics. It does not matter how different areas of responsibility are assigned within an organisation provided there is sufficient internal coordination and communication, so that everyone is working according with a coherent strategic purpose in which sustainability is a common thread. When determining your sustainability strategy, you have to decide on an approach and a governing structure for implementing your sustainability strategy that are relevant for your organisation.

SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

Sustainability is a concept founded on a number of key principles. In the management system standard ISO 20121 (see p35), these are specified as:

- **Integrity** - adherence to ethical principles
- **Inclusivity** - practice of fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all interested parties

- **Stewardship** – taking responsibility for one's actions that affect environmental performance, economic activity and social progress
- **Transparency** - openness about decisions and activities that affect society, the economy and the environment

Other standards and definitions may use different or additional terms, such as accountability, continual improvement, legal compliance, collaboration, innovation and responsibility, but the four listed above provide a core set of principles that adequately convey the sense of what sustainability is about. These are applicable throughout the world and across all business sectors. Sport is no exception. Indeed, sport has an inherent affinity for such principles through its values, as well as its essential purpose to serve others, encourage participation, and guide and educate young people.

Unfortunately, however, sport has also been affected by various negative issues, such as corruption, match-fixing, doping, human rights violations and gender inequality. Sport has also at times been responsible for disregarding and even damaging the environment and local communities. These impacts run counter to the positive values and ethos of sport. Ultimately, the way sports bodies provide for fair treatment of individuals, communities and the environment will be crucial to their own long-term wellbeing, reputation and place in society. In this way, the principles of sustainability and the values and ethics of sport are inextricably linked.



Case study

WORLD SAILING SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA 2030

As the governing body for the sport of sailing, World Sailing issued a detailed sustainability strategy in November 2016. The stated ambition is to achieve substantial change within the sport that can contribute actively to global sustainability.

World Sailing's sustainability programme is based on recommendations across six operational areas, and is aligned with both the IOC Sustainability Strategy and the UN SDGs:

- Technical standards
- Events
- Training
- Venues and facilities
- Members
- Participation

Like the IOC Sustainability Strategy, these are clearly focused on the specific activities that make up the sport of sailing. Underpinning the strategy across each of these operational areas are nine objectives:

- Establish a robust approach to sustainability across the sport, sharing best practice and setting standards and targets, focusing on World Sailing operations, events and venues.
- Reduce World Sailing's carbon footprint and promote resource efficiency across the sport.
- Respect and contribute to ecosystem health and biodiversity.
- Promote diversity and accessibility across the sport and drive gender equity at World Sailing events in line with IOC 2020 sustainability objectives.
- Ensure sustainability is embedded into the teaching of sailing through teaching and coaching frameworks.

- Promote a culture of sustainability by sharing best practice and increasing sustainability awareness across Member National Authorities, events, venues and affiliated industries.
- Set technical standards by 2030 to reduce the environmental impact of the sailing industry, focusing on end of life of composites, and engine and energy technology.
- Take a science-based approach underpinned by research to understand the impacts and identify solutions.
- Ensure credibility and transparency through robust monitoring and reporting.

These objectives were the outcome of the work of a sustainability commission of leading experts from within and outside the sport, who were tasked with advising on the development of the Sustainability Agenda 2030 and guiding and monitoring progress against the plan.

For each operational area, the strategy references the link between proposed actions and the overarching objectives, as well as how they relate to the UN SDGs and the IOC's sustainability themes.

This is a comprehensive sustainability strategy, appropriate for the sport of sailing. Other sports organisations will have different priorities, but the key learning here is to consult widely; understand the nature of your sport and/or organisation – its impacts, challenges and opportunities; and determine how this fits with the global sustainability agenda.



3

GETTING STARTED



GETTING STARTED

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is deciding to get started. Sustainability is a vast topic, and it can be daunting to know where to begin.

Many organisations start with small projects. These may typically be focused on recycling, energy efficiency, tree planting and/or other conservation work. For very small organisations, these can be worthwhile starting points and good ways of engaging with volunteers and the local community. However, these types of initiatives – important as they are – tend to be ad hoc environmental projects, and do not usually embrace the wider social and ethical dimensions of sustainability.

Many sports organisations do charitable work with schools and community groups. Again, this is good to do, but it does not necessarily address impacts and issues arising from your organisation's core activities. A true approach to sustainability has to be based on what your organisation actually does in its day-to-day work. The environmental and social implications of your activities need to be understood and factored into your policies and plans.

Importantly, even for the smallest of NOCs and IFs, with limited physical or financial resources, your organisation still has a voice and a constituency of followers. This means you can use your influence to advocate and to raise awareness of sustainability issues affecting sport. To take an active role in dialogue with public authorities and other institutions means you have a place at the table and can make it known that sport has a relevant place in public policy discussions on environmental, social and economic issues. Of course, to have a more credible voice, it helps to be seen to be making strides towards addressing sustainability issues, even at a simple level.

Organisations with a larger remit and profile should be thinking of a more strategic and holistic approach that fully addresses all relevant issues, risks and opportunities.

A TRUE APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY
HAS TO BE BASED ON YOUR
ORGANISATION'S DAY-TO-DAY WORK



TAKE STOCK OF WHERE YOU ARE

Before embarking on any defined sustainability programme, it is worth taking stock of your current situation. Some of the things to consider are listed below:

- ?** What does your organisation actually do?
- ?** Are there any aspects of your organisation's activities that might have an impact on the environment, cultural heritage, local communities or other people?
- ?** Do you have any existing, or previous, initiatives related to sustainability? If so how successful are/were they and what have you learnt from them?
- ?** Have you experienced any pressure from sponsors, regulators, media or civil society to address environmental, social or ethical issues?
- ?** Is your sport/organisation potentially at risk from impacts of climate change (flooding, drought, forest fires, temperature rise)?
- ?** Do you have any strategic plans to grow your sport/organisation? If so, how might these affect your answers to the previous questions?
- ?** What resources do you have – people, sites, partner organisations, expert advisers, funds?
- ?** Research what others in your sport might already be doing, such as National Federations.

This can be an internal exercise, although an external “critical friend” would more likely give you an honest answer. If sustainability is a new step for you, this exercise will help highlight your main areas of risk and opportunity and give you a feel for the way forward.

For those already involved in sustainability in some way, think of this as a “gap analysis” to identify strengths and weaknesses. This can be assessed in the form of a maturity matrix (see page 33).



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPLICATIONS OF A NEW APPROACH

As you begin on the path to developing a sustainability programme, it is important to consider what you want to achieve and the potential benefits this may bring. At the same time, you need to consider potential obstacles you may face.

Even if you are firmly persuaded that it is the right thing to do, in any established organisation there will be consequences of any change in approach. Rethinking established ways of doing things is always a challenge – it can be seen as disruptive. On the other hand, change can be an energising and motivating opportunity. It allows space for fresh thinking and new ideas.

Ultimately, sustainability is not so much a technical challenge as one of embracing new processes and attitudes. A critical starting point is therefore to look at potential opportunities and challenges. This exercise will help guide your approach as you go forward.

OPPORTUNITIES

The benefits of implementing sustainability in a serious and meaningful way are considerable. The top reason is simple: it is about doing the

right thing and being a responsible player in society. This aligns with the core principles and values of sport and is therefore a natural fit.

There is also value in taking a leadership role and driving change, rather than ignoring issues until change is forced upon you. By being proactive in adopting sustainability, the following opportunities and benefits may arise.

Cost savings

Sustainability brings direct savings and efficiencies in resource consumption (energy, fuel, water and consumables), minimising waste and optimising the lifetime value of goods and materials through effective sourcing and re-use strategies. Planning, design and permitting processes work more smoothly and cost-effectively with a strong sustainability focus, and risks from pollution incidents, fines, protests, complaints and allegations can be mitigated more effectively.

Increased revenue

Commercial sponsors are attracted to organisations that complement their brand identity. Strong sustainability credentials also translate to lower risk. Sports sponsorship these days is more about partnership and working together based on shared vision and values. It is rarely about unqualified support in return for brand visibility.

CHANGE CAN BE AN ENERGISING
AND MOTIVATING OPPORTUNITY.
IT ALLOWS SPACE FOR FRESH
THINKING AND NEW IDEAS



Reputation/image

Achieving credible recognition for sustainability is a key part of building a level of acceptance and trust among local communities, public authorities and other stakeholders. This is often referred to as one's "licence to operate" and is fundamental to the long-term wellbeing of the sport sector. Unfortunately, the image of sport has been badly tarnished in recent years in relation to match-fixing, doping, corruption, excessive costs, ticket prices, labour rights etc. In the majority of cases, sustainability will not make those issues go away, but it is part of the solution and supports good governance, accountability and transparency, which are so vital for securing public approval.

Legal compliance

Basic legal compliance should be a given for any organisation, although this is not always the case. Following a sustainability path should put you in a better place in terms of identifying, understanding and anticipating regulatory requirements. This is another form of cost saving – or rather cost avoidance – and also supports reputation risk management.

Most laws and regulations relating to sustainability tend to be domestic in nature, and these can vary considerably from one jurisdiction to another. For sports organisations working across different countries and regions this can be quite complex. As a matter of principle, the responsible thing to do is to base your approach on the highest legal standards you encounter, rather than drop to a lower level just because local standards are weaker.

Optimising talent

Sustainable organisations are open, diverse and inclusive. This allows people from different backgrounds, gender and ability to contribute more effectively, bring new perspectives and ideas, which in turn can generate a sense of engagement, greater motivation and even pride among your people. Harnessing and empowering your collective talent is probably the most tangible way of securing the opportunities and benefits from adopting sustainability.

CHALLENGES

In the table that follows we set out the commonly perceived barriers to implementing sustainability and how to respond to them. These are not excuses for inaction; they are simply realities that need to be confronted.

Once you've overcome any barriers to getting started on sustainability, there are likely to be some further challenges as you progress along this path. Some of these may be the same barriers recurring, and some will be new situations. What is always important, however, is to maintain continuity of purpose towards long-term goals.

Sustainability is not a fad. It is now a mainstream concern of modern society and cannot be treated as a short-term, one-off matter. It is not a project; it is a way of working, and it is vital to persevere through challenges, not regress to old ways when problems arise or it seems too difficult.

HARNESSING AND EMPOWERING YOUR COLLECTIVE TALENT IS PROBABLY THE MOST TANGIBLE WAY OF SECURING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS FROM ADOPTING SUSTAINABILITY



Perceived barriers to doing sustainability	Reason given	Response/solution
Cost	Sustainable options will be more expensive.	Sometimes true, but typically you are more likely to see potential savings from sustainable solutions. Sustainable solutions usually offer better value when all factors are considered. For example, procurement of goods that takes full account of their operational costs and end-of-life disposal can achieve considerable savings and greater value over an item's lifecycle.
Time	Everyone is busy – we don't have time to bother with new approaches.	All organisations – and sport is no exception – need to set aside some time to reflect on where they are going and what is happening in the world around them. Eventually, implementing sustainability should become part and parcel of the normal way of working – embedded in decision-making. If it feels like an extra burden, it is not working properly.
Resistance to change	Internal resistance to changing ways of working, either through a sense of "it's not important", or "we are already doing enough".	This can be overcome by persuasive leadership and effective internal communication and incentives. No organisation should be complacent about being immune to societal expectations. People expect sport bodies to be responsible in the way they are governed and treat people, as well as show respect for the environment in which they operate. It is better to change under one's own terms than to have change enforced, as would inevitably happen at some point.
Key external parties not supportive	Fear that sponsors or other partners will not be willing to support new ways of working.	It is always important to speak with your key stakeholders to explain what you want to do and encourage them to join in and feel part of the initiative. Many of them might already be thinking along similar lines, and this could lead to even more productive partnerships.
Difficulty	We don't really understand this, and it seems too technical and difficult.	It is not about being experts or perfect. Nor does it have to be too technical. Much of sustainability is about thinking and acting smarter. You can build up in stages, improving as you go. Some training and new skills may be required, but this is good for people development and can help motivate staff and volunteers.
Lack of evidence to justify change	Not always clear which option is "more sustainable".	Often there isn't just one right answer, but this should not be an excuse to do nothing. Try to make informed choices based on what is known and/or your priority objectives; learn and improve based on experience.
Credibility	Fear of stepping into the unknown and being criticised for insufficient effort or failure to meet targets.	Organisations do not get criticised for trying to implement sustainability, but they do risk criticism when they over-claim their achievements, or when people think they don't care. The worst course of action is to do nothing and pretend it doesn't matter.

Table 1: Some common reasons why organisations hesitate to implement sustainability



4

ESSENTIAL STEPS



ESSENTIAL STEPS

This section outlines the basics of putting an effective sustainability programme in place. It is based on a series of essential steps that provide a pathway for any sports organisation to commit to sustainability, to engage meaningfully and to “walk the talk”.

This approach focuses on process, not specific technical aspects. This is because you need first to have an enabling environment in place in which to develop your programme, and then keep it going. Individual circumstances of geography, environment and culture will play a major role in determining the eventual content and the actual measures you put in place.

DEFINE A CLEAR VISION AND STRATEGY

Assuming you have taken stock of your current situation and considered the opportunities and challenges as described in the previous chapter, you are now ready to move forward and put in place a meaningful sustainability programme.

The starting point is to be clear as to why you want to implement sustainability and the ultimate objectives you hope to achieve through

this approach. Quite often, organisations start off on a sustainability programme because they sense it is important and that they should be doing something, but without really knowing where it is heading, or how it relates to their central purpose.

Therefore, rather than simply being a “nice-to-do” ad hoc project, sustainability needs to be examined as a strategic choice for the future direction of your organisation. Think of it in terms of helping you in your core mission of developing sport. Consider how a sustainability initiative will help you to build more positive relations with public authorities and local communities; attract new sponsors and events; and/or improve efficiency and help you manage your resources better. All these advantages are potentially possible by adopting sustainability as a working principle, but they do not just happen by chance. It requires planning and purpose.

If you really mean to adopt a sustainability approach and to do it well, it needs to be integral to your organisation’s long-term ambitions. It must not be a separate, unconnected exercise, because ultimately this will not work and will potentially create greater reputational risk.

IF YOU REALLY MEAN TO ADOPT A
SUSTAINABILITY APPROACH AND TO DO IT
WELL, IT NEEDS TO BE INTEGRAL TO YOUR
ORGANISATION’S LONG-TERM AMBITIONS



ESTABLISHING A SUSTAINABILITY VISION

The question to ask is what would a truly sustainable NOC or IF look like? This creates the exciting challenge of imagining a future sustainable state and then back-casting to today's situation in order to assess the gap and, therefore, what you need to do to get to the desired state.

This is a bold approach, but it is more powerful than the conventional one of benchmarking against peers or looking for incremental improvements. Being 10 or 20 per cent better than some calculated baseline is certainly progress, but it does not tell you whether that is enough.

A strong vision should certainly be challenging. It may not be obvious at first how to achieve it, but by establishing the eventual outcome you seek, you will have created a focus for developing your strategic plans.

Examples of possible long-term strategic goals to underpin your long-term vision could include:

- having a positive impact on biodiversity;
- having operations that emit no greenhouse gases or other harmful substances;
- sourcing all products and services in ways that have no negative environmental or social impacts and applying ethical supply chain policies;
- treating all products and materials as valuable resources that can be re-used multiple times;
- creating a safe and inclusive working environment in which all your people can flourish;
- helping to create and support thriving communities wherever you operate; and
- engaging and empowering your partners to act in the best interests of people and the environment.

Some goals may be dependent on advances in technology, limitations in local infrastructure or cultural factors outside your control, whereas others could be driven through your own policies and decisions about how strongly you want to pursue the sustainability agenda.

DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP, COMMITMENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Presidents, chief executives, board members and directors – no matter how you are structured – need to give their active backing

to the sustainability programme. This requires regular engagement in discussions, reviewing progress and advocating the approach. They must also be prepared to “walk the talk” by ensuring that their actions and decisions match the organisation's values and principles.



The very best examples of sustainability derive from good leadership, whereby the actions of top management inspire others to become involved. Ultimately, sustainability is a shared responsibility that needs to be woven throughout the organisational structure and connected with partners and other stakeholders; but this has to start at the top. To do this effectively requires decision-making processes (governance) that are transparent, inclusive and accountable. In terms of governance, it is important to have clarity on how decisions are made and how different entities (committees, working groups and directors) inter-relate. This is good business practice in any case, and for

sustainability it is a matter of ensuring that the issues are properly considered in the decision-making processes. This means that, for any major decision – for example, a large procurement or sponsorship deal, choice of a venue for an event, defining policies on inclusion, travel or working conditions etc. – sustainability criteria will have been factored into the options. The mechanisms for achieving this may include setting out policies and guidelines for all managers and committees to follow; providing structured templates with sustainability criteria/questions to examine; and/or relying on key personnel to examine the issues and provide recommendations (see also Chapter 5).

SUSTAINABILITY IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Depending on the size of your organisation, you may decide to nominate someone, or a small team, as (a) “sustainability champion(s)”. This could include having a management board member with responsibility for sustainability, and you may consider extending this approach to other committees and working groups in your organisation.

Larger organisations may recruit a professional sustainability manager and eventually build an in-house team.

No matter whether these are part-time voluntary assignments or full-time

professional roles, or anything in between, the organisation’s leadership must remain engaged in the programme. There is always the danger that, by nominating a responsible person or team, everyone else assumes that sustainability is being taken care of so they do not need to do anything.

Sustainability is always a shared responsibility. A focal person or team can drive and coordinate the effort, but it must have the active engagement of everyone, and that is why leadership commitment is so vital.

THE VERY BEST EXAMPLES
OF SUSTAINABILITY DERIVE FROM
GOOD LEADERSHIP, WHEREBY THE
ACTIONS OF TOP MANAGEMENT INSPIRE
OTHERS TO BECOME INVOLVED



ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Sustainability cannot be pursued in isolation. By definition, it is an outward-looking approach that actively seeks input from people both inside and outside your organisation.

Engagement with interested parties should be seen as a way of improving your understanding of the economic, social and environmental context within which your organisation operates, how other people view you and what they may reasonably expect of you. This is valuable for building wider support beyond your immediate sports community, and for anticipating how external parties may react to your future plans.

It is worth starting by compiling a list of who you think are your stakeholders. It will be surprising how many different entities you interact with on a regular basis. Map them into categories first. Internally, you may have staff, volunteers, members and perhaps athletes/players, coaches and technical officials. Closely associated but external are likely to be your suppliers and commercial sponsors or other funding bodies, and possibly owners/managers of venues, training facilities and colleges, and sports industry professional bodies. Consider, too, your sport's followers in the general public and the media. The final layer will be all the other external non-sporting entities you either deal with or potentially affect through your activities: public agencies, NGOs and other civil society organisations and local communities.

Each of these different groups will have an interest in your emerging sustainability programme, albeit from different perspectives. Many will be willing to contribute ideas and expertise; others will want to know how it might affect them and what changes could occur to existing arrangements. The important thing to do is to inform them about your plans and invite feedback. This should be tailored according to whether they are internal, external but sport-related, or external and not sport-related.

Practical ways of gaining stakeholder input may include:

- one-on-one meetings;
- group briefings and discussions;
- structured surveys and questionnaires;
- sending out draft policies/strategies for comment; and
- establishing specialist working groups.

Stakeholder engagement is a vital part of sustainability, while sustainability is a great topic around which people can come together and discuss ideas. This needs to be done on a regular basis to achieve the best outcomes and to build and maintain positive relationships. One-off interactions are not particularly useful and can lead to unfulfilled expectations, unless there is a very clear, singular purpose.



Given the high profile of larger sports bodies and certain sports events, there is a risk that some external groups will try to leverage this for their own campaign purposes, or they may simply have unrealistic expectations. It is rather like the old adage: “you cannot please everyone”.

The best way to mitigate such risks is to have a broad-based approach to engagement so that you are less exposed to individual groups or campaigns. Building positive relations with credible organisations and individuals across a range of interests will be a good buffer for instances when you encounter a particularly challenging or hostile situation.

Stakeholder engagement is also channelled through your communications and reporting activities, although when dealing with sustainability matters, this requires some special considerations (see Chapter 5).

DETERMINE WHICH ISSUES MATTER MOST

One of the most important things to do is to figure out which aspects of sustainability you need to prioritise. It is easy to say that everything is important, and of course that is true. But there are always some topics, or issues, that are particularly important for you to address as a priority, while others may be interesting and worthy, but not directly relevant to what you do. For example, if yours is a purely

indoor sport using existing facilities, you are probably not going to be impacting directly on natural habitats and biodiversity. But you may be concerned about indoor air quality and other health and wellbeing issues for people using a building – such as being affected by types of paints, varnishes and solvents used, air-conditioning and heating systems.

Determining priority issues is what is referred to as a “materiality” assessment. Ideally, this should have three angles. The first is to select issues that you consider important for achieving your sporting and/or organisational goals. For example, a strong focus on nature protection would be advisable if your sport depends on the natural environment, whereas an indoor/ office-based organisation may prioritise working conditions and travel-related aspects.

The second angle is to identify if there are any particular sustainability-related risks that your sport and/or organisation faces. These could range from climate change impacts to dealing with local community concerns about litter, noise or disruption caused by events; or they might be risks related to working conditions, or illegal products in the supply chain.

The third angle is to seek views from your stakeholders. Devise a survey or questionnaire that asks them (or a good sample of them) which aspects of sustainability related to what you do as an organisation they think are most important.

IDENTIFY IF THERE ARE ANY PARTICULAR
SUSTAINABILITY-RELATED RISKS THAT YOUR
SPORT AND/OR ORGANISATION FACES



The questionnaire can be pre-populated with a wide range of sustainability topics. You can compile this list by researching other published sustainability plans (for example from your city or region, or other sports bodies); or for something more global, you could check against some or all of the 169 targets associated with the 17 SDGs.

Stakeholder responses will be from their own perspectives and not necessarily match what you think matters most to your organisation. What this does do, however, is to give you a strong insight into how other groups inside and outside your organisation perceive what you do and how it affects them. From these three angles, you will now have a long list of issues that you need to filter down to a manageable list of priority issues.

There will be an element of judgement here, but importantly, by having done the exercise to canvass opinions from stakeholders and examine your own objectives, activities and risks, you will have all the information necessary to make an informed choice of which issues to prioritise.

Ultimately, there is no absolute right or wrong answer. This is about being confident that you have identified issues that are most relevant to your context and being comfortable that you are able to justify these choices.

Define scope

It is quite easy to fall into the trap of wanting to do too much across a broad range of topics. Every issue can seem important, but when examined more closely, some will be particularly relevant because they relate to your main areas of impact. Other issues, while important to some people, may not really impinge on what you do, or be affected by your activities. To focus effort on these can be distracting from your main purpose.

This is why it is good to be clear on the scope of your sustainability programme, both in terms of what you are going to focus on and to be able to justify what you are not going to do.

Determining the scope of your sustainability programme should ultimately be about things where you have either direct control or strong influence. For example, technical specifications for sports equipment and fields of play, goods and services you procure, events you own and/or manage, the selection of venues and choice of partners are essentially matters where you have strong control and could therefore make informed choices taking into account sustainability factors.

In other situations, your organisation may be participating in someone else's event, or perhaps you are reliant on third parties (for example, public authorities or venue owners) to deliver something that affects your activities. In these cases you do not have control, and depending upon the amount of influence you can exert, it may be best to exclude certain items from the scope of your sustainability programme.

DETERMINING THE SCOPE OF YOUR
SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME SHOULD
ULTIMATELY BE ABOUT THINGS WHERE
YOU HAVE EITHER DIRECT CONTROL OR
STRONG INFLUENCE



Case study

Say you are an IF of a sport played in indoor arenas and you have selected indoor air quality as a priority issue for your federation's sustainability programme. However, you do not own any venues, so where do you draw the line between what is in scope and what is out of scope?

In this case, let's say you have the ability to decide on venues for your world championships and other major events promoted by your organisation. Here, you have the opportunity to select only venues that meet your indoor air quality criteria, or you agree to host events at venues that fall below the threshold for air quality, but which are committed to working with you to improve

standards in time for your event (and maintain them thereafter in the legacy phase).

The scope of your sustainability programme would therefore include venues where the IF's events are held. You could not include all venues where your sport is practised, because for the majority of them you do not have any say in how they are managed in this regard. You may choose to produce guidance for clubs and venues generally with a view to influencing the raising of standards, but this would not be a formal part of your programme, as you would have no control over whether anyone heeded your guidance.

SET OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

Having defined the scope, the next step should be to establish some objectives and targets in the form of an action plan.

An objective is something that you plan to do or achieve. It should be relevant to your vision and purpose and related to the priority themes you have identified.

Example objectives:

- To reduce water consumption.
- To be more open with stakeholders.

Targets are specific measures against an objective. For example:

- Achieve 20 per cent annual reduction in water consumption against a baseline value.
- Publish an annual sustainability report.

The first example target above is a quantitative measure, which you might exceed or not quite reach, but you should have some measure of how well you did in relation to the target. The second one is of a yes/no kind; you publish a report or you don't: you can't "nearly" produce a report.

Targets are important because people like to see tangible things that you are working towards. However, these need to be realistic. If you pitch too high you risk falling short, and conversely, targets that are too easy will fail the credibility test. To get the balance right, it is worth testing draft targets with a sample of different stakeholders to gauge their reaction.



EVALUATE PROGRESS

Sustainability is a continual process. There is no fixed end point, but of course objectives and targets can be reviewed periodically to see if they need adjusting. An organisation may have a strategy for a 10- or 15-year period, or even longer. This would be broken down into shorter target periods of say three, four or five years.

Whichever way you structure your action plan, there should be regular reviews (at least annually, sometimes more often if there are many time-critical actions) and these should involve top management, so that your leadership team is fully engaged and aware of progress. At the end of each target period, you should carry out a detailed review of the whole programme to see if it is still aligned with your objectives, or whether some strategic redirection is necessary.

In many cases, it may not initially be obvious what constitutes “good”, or there may not be any previous or comparable information to judge against. In these situations, measurements should be aiming to establish baselines for the activities being measured

(environmental, social and economic), so that in future periods you can track progress relative to these baselines.

It is important to ensure that your baseline data are representative of normal practice. If, for example, your organisation has a cyclical scaling up and down of activity around key sporting events (such as regional games or Olympic Games), a single year’s data may be atypical. Therefore, be sure to set your baselines to reflect the most appropriate recording periods.

Monitoring is about checking that you are on track towards meeting your targets. Here you can set what are called key performance indicators (KPIs). If, say, your target is a 20 per cent water reduction in a year, your KPI could be the amount of water reduction achieved within six months. If the figures show you have managed only five per cent after six months, you can see you are falling behind on your target. In that case, you could decide to implement more water conservation measures to get back on track, or identify the factors preventing you from meeting the target and decide if the target needs recalibrating.

SUSTAINABILITY IS A CONTINUAL PROCESS.
THERE IS NO FIXED END POINT, BUT OF
COURSE OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS CAN
BE REVIEWED PERIODICALLY TO SEE IF
THEY NEED ADJUSTING



It is not always practical to have KPIs for every target; some are either done or not done. However, you can set deadlines, so if something is over time that should flag up a warning.

Many organisations miss targets for various reasons. The critical thing is to learn why, and to be able to remedy things accordingly. The worst thing is to give up or pretend it does not matter. Stakeholders can be very forgiving if they believe an organisation has been sincerely trying and is clearly learning how to improve. Where you get criticised is for underperforming without good reason and not being open about the challenges.

REPORT, COMMUNICATE AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

The final key step is “telling the story”. Having invested time, effort and resources in sustainability actions, it makes sense to let people know what you have done and what you have learnt along the way.

Sustainability reporting is a good discipline;

the need to demonstrate some real results is an incentive for measuring progress and keeping records, which in turn can encourage you to improve further over the next reporting cycle.

As with any form of communication, it is important to decide what you want to communicate, to whom, and through which channels and media. At the simplest level, it may be a matter of signage, posters, notices on bulletin boards, updates on your website, articles in newsletters or a mention in your organisation’s annual report.

The next level up would be to take a more proactive approach to briefing the media and seeking opportunities to present your sustainability programme at seminars and conferences, and to develop an online and social media presence.

At the top end of the scale, some organisations produce formal sustainability reports following recognised international guidelines, such as the UN Global Compact, or the Global Report Initiative.

THE FINAL KEY STEP IS “TELLING THE STORY”. HAVING INVESTED TIME, EFFORT AND RESOURCES INTO SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS, LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE DONE AND WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT ALONG THE WAY



5

STEPPING UP A LEVEL



STEPPING UP A LEVEL

All sports organisations will be at different levels of the sustainability process; many will be just beginning, or thinking about it; others will be more advanced but not in a fully structured and strategic way; and some will be fully engaged and leading the way. It is useful, therefore, to consider where you fit on this scale.

MATURITY MATRIX

The table below is what is known as a maturity matrix. It shows what might be expected at

three stages – basic, intermediate and advanced – along the path from complete beginner to leader in the field. These are not hard-and-fast levels. In reality, there will be a continuum from bottom to top, and some organisations may be at a basic level in some areas and more advanced in others. However, for the sake of simplicity, this table gives a snapshot of the three levels, to provide some guidance on where you might fit and what you need to consider in order to move on to a higher level.

Activity	Basic level	Intermediate level	Advanced level
Vision (and strategy)	Recognition that sustainability is important for the organisation to develop.	Sustainability included in corporate plans for the organisation.	Fully developed strategic sustainability vision consistent with the overall organisation's vision.
Policy and governance	Leadership commitment to adopt a sustainability programme.	Sustainability policy in place and lead person/department for sustainability identified.	Sustainability policy in place and clear responsibilities and accountability for sustainability across the organisation.
Stakeholder engagement	Initial soundings with selected key partners and staff.	Structured approach to sampling stakeholder views.	Regular engagement with all key stakeholder groups. Feedback used to inform and refine sustainability plan.
Scope, objectives and targets	Small-scale activities undertaken on ad hoc basis.	Some prioritisation of sustainability actions and initial development of an action plan.	Clear definition of scope of sustainability programme and objectives, and a range of quantitative and qualitative targets in place for each activity.
Measuring and monitoring	Purely qualitative assessment of outcomes.	Some data-gathering to complement general assessment of progress.	Formal processes in place for collecting and assessing data relating to sustainability performance, and using results to refine plans and targets.
Reporting, communicating and sharing knowledge	Basic mention in organisation's reports and communications.	Awareness-raising initiatives undertaken and initial attempts to report progress via existing corporate reporting mechanisms.	Regular and proactive public reporting of progress on sustainability programme via a range of communications channels. Contributing to knowledge-transfer programmes.

Table 2: Sustainability maturity matrix



GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Governance describes the process of decision-making and how decisions are implemented. In the world of sport, there have been many concerns about governance and social issues in recent times, and it is vital that sports organisations can demonstrate awareness of and responsiveness to these challenges.

The basis for tackling such issues is a reaffirmation of core values and principles, such as integrity, transparency, inclusivity and accountability. Each of these is fundamental to sustainability.

In organisations committed to addressing sustainability issues, there should be mechanisms to ensure that environmental, social, economic and ethical risks and opportunities are properly factored into the long-term development strategy.

One of the principal means of achieving this is by making top managers accountable for sustainability performance. Without accountability, sustainability can become just another short-term initiative that quickly fades into the background. It is therefore important to define who within an organisation is responsible for sustainability issues at both strategic and operational levels.

This could be a specific board formally responsible for sustainability, or an individual member of the Executive Committee.

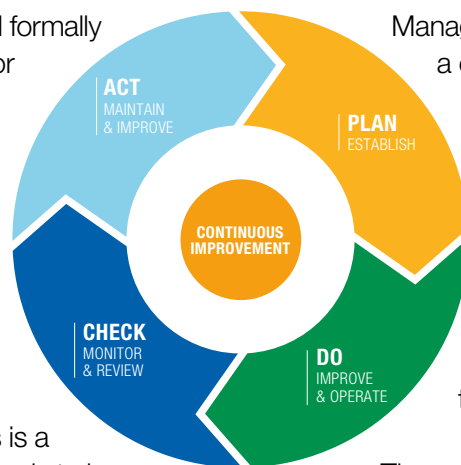
Larger organisations may engage an in-house sustainability manager/team. One of the critical decisions is where such a manager/team should be placed within the organisation. Normally this is a strategic role, and therefore needs to be central to how the organisation is planned and managed. It should not be a peripheral or isolated position. Nor should it be within communications or marketing, or an individual technical function.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS APPROACH

All organisations have some form of management system whether or not they formally recognise it as such. It is how you work and do business. To allow sustainability its proper potential, it needs to be integrated into the policies and procedures of your organisation. This is what we refer to as a “Sustainability Management System” (SMS).

The activities listed in the previous maturity matrix represent the principal elements of an SMS. Organisations at the advanced level may be considered to have a fully functioning SMS in place.

The advantages of such an approach are considerable. Not only is it a more efficient way of working that can identify and achieve significant cost savings, both directly and through minimising risks, the operation of a good SMS will also help gain traction internally among staff and externally among partners and other stakeholders. This will reinforce the collective effort that is so important for achieving progress in sustainability, and will help identify opportunities and innovative solutions to take the organisation forward.



Management systems typically follow a cycle commonly known as “Plan, Do, Check, Act”, as illustrated here. This approach achieves a balance between the systems and behavioural aspects of management. It also treats sustainability management as an integral part of good management generally, rather than as a standalone system.

The most appropriate standard for the sports community is ISO 20121:2012 Event Sustainability Management Systems with Guidance for Use (see box on next page).



ISO 20121: 2012 EVENT SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS WITH GUIDANCE FOR USE

The international standard, ISO 20121: 2012 is a voluntary, certifiable management system standard for the events sector (i.e. sports but also cultural, political and business events). It was first developed as a British Standard (BS 8901: 2009) in association with the sustainability programme for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The standard evolved to international level as ISO 20121 in June 2012, and is a significant legacy of the London Games.

Several major organisations have successfully followed and been independently certified to the standard over the subsequent years: the Rio 2016 Organising Committee; COP 21, Paris 2015; World Expo Milano 2015; IUCN Congress in Hawaii 2016; World Sailing; Ben Ainslie Racing Americas Cup team; Roland Garros; Paris 2024 Candidature; and many other individual event organisations and venues of varying sizes. The most recent notable certification to the standard was the World Economic Forum in January 2018, for the operation of its Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

As a management system standard, ISO 20121 is about how an organisation goes about addressing sustainability. It is a tool for helping organisations to embed

sustainability principles and actions into their corporate policies and procedures. The standard does not define how much sustainability one should do, or what issues to address.

This is an important distinction that is often miscommunicated, leading to claims that a given event is highly “sustainable”. Certification to ISO 20121 means that the organising body has an effective sustainability management system in place, which is really a prerequisite for achieving one’s sustainability objectives. It is therefore a means to an end, not the end itself.

By following the requirements of ISO 20121, an organisation will be able to identify its material issues, risks and opportunities. This provides the basis to put in place relevant processes for planning what to do; implementing a plan; monitoring and evaluating progress; and then feeding back what has been learnt in order to refine and improve future plans.

A key principle of ISO 20121 is continuous commitment. Sustainability is naturally an evolving topic, and a well-managed organisation should always be looking for ways to improve its performance and minimise risk (just like an athlete or sports team should be).



Independent certification

Although not obligatory, it is definitely worth considering the opportunity to have your SMS independently certified. However, this can be an expensive undertaking, so it is important to be clear why you would do this. It is possible to follow the processes and technical requirements of ISO 20121 without formal certification. However, working towards certification as a team is a good way of

engaging people and provides justification to review existing policies and procedures.

Certification is effectively proof to your stakeholders that you are taking sustainability seriously. This is important for public credibility, which is a valuable commodity for sports events, sports organisations and venue operators. It reinforces one's licence to operate.

AUDIT READINESS CHECK

Before committing to the formal process of certification audits, it is important to know that you are ready for this step.

As with all management system standards, ISO 20121 has a requirement for an internal audit process. While you need to do this to be compliant with the standard, it is also in your best interest, as an internal audit should flag up any areas of weakness ("non-conformity" in the language of the standard) and confirm whether you are sufficiently on track to go for certification.

Large organisations may have an in-house internal audit function (usually within the legal or risk assurance departments) that can fulfil this task, but normally you would expect to use an external specialist, possibly in combination with an in-house staff member. Internal auditors should not have had direct involvement in delivering or operating the SMS.

As a simple readiness check, think in terms of what an auditor will seek to know:

- What are your sustainability objectives and targets?
- Why did you choose these particular ones?
- How are you implementing your plans?
- How do you measure their effectiveness?
- What process do you have in place to correct things that go wrong?

There are, of course, many other points they could look into, but if you are able to answer these essential points well, you should be in good shape to tackle anything they ask.



Other standards

In addition to ISO 20121, there are other international standards that some sports organisations may be aware of: for example ISO 26000:2010 Social Responsibility and ISO 20400:2017 Sustainable Procurement. Both of these are guidance standards, not for certification, but can be useful to help you along the path towards more sustainable operations. Some may even have looked at ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems with Guidance for Use. The latter is a broader industry standard, primarily focused on environmental matters, and tends to be used for much larger scale operations than would be the case for sport.

Beyond the ISO standards, there is a vast array of other types of standards and certification schemes, such as for green buildings (for example, LEED and BREEAM); product standard kite marks (for example, for timber, cotton, fish and seafood, jewellery and agricultural products); and industry- or sector-specific schemes (for example, GEO certification for golf courses). A good source of information for many of these is via ISEAL, the global membership association for credible sustainability standards.

Independent certification to recognised standards (not just management systems, but also more technical or results-based schemes and product marks) is important for achieving credibility in this field, and for managing some of the reputational challenges faced by sports bodies.

SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING

Formal sustainability reporting is a valuable tool for establishing credibility in this field. It does, however, hold a number of challenges. One of the greatest difficulties can be to obtain reliable, accurate and relevant data. Very often, organisations develop their sustainability plans and only later decide to produce a formal report. The problem then can be that the initial objectives and targets may turn out to be difficult to measure and quantify, or they might be difficult to repeat over multiple reporting cycles.

The best approach – if possible – is to consider your reporting requirements at the time you are developing your sustainability strategy and action plans. By anticipating your reporting needs upfront, you are more likely to be able to frame your plans and targets in ways that can more readily be measured and evaluated. This is one area where specialist help can be really valuable.

Reporting should always be factual, so others can judge your performance. Promoting your achievements is good for marketing and communications (see box on next page).



REPORTING PRINCIPLES

A good sustainability report should follow the principles set out below. These are drawn from The Global Reporting G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines:

Principles for defining report content

- **Stakeholder inclusiveness** – Identify your stakeholders and explain how you have taken into account their reasonable expectations and interests.
- **Context** – Present your performance in context. The underlying question of sustainability reporting is how your organisation affects (or plans to affect) economic, environmental and social conditions both within your sector or sport and at different geographical levels (local, regional national etc.).
- **Materiality** – There are many topics that could be reported, and it is important to focus on those that may reasonably be considered important for reflecting your sustainability impacts and/or could influence decisions by stakeholders. Materiality is the threshold at which aspects become sufficiently important that they should be reported.
- **Completeness** – The report needs to cover material aspects and their boundaries such that readers can gain a fair appreciation of your significant sustainability impacts and achievements over the given reporting period.

Principles for defining report quality

- **Balance** – The overall presentation of the report should provide an unbiased picture of both positive and negative aspects to enable a reasonable assessment of your performance to be made.
- **Comparability** – By presenting information in a consistent manner, you should be able to assess your performance against previous reporting cycles and other similar organisations or events.
- **Accuracy** – Information should be sufficiently detailed and factually correct for readers to assess performance.
- **Timeliness** – Reporting intervals should be reasonable, and the information contained should be as up to date as possible.
- **Clarity** – Information should be accessible and understandable to those reading the report. (It is reasonable to expect readers to have a general understanding of your organisation and its context, but try to minimise technical jargon requiring specialist knowledge to understand.)
- **Reliability** – Processes for gathering, collating and analysing information for use in the report should be capable of being examined to establish the quality and relevance of the information. This is an important part of gaining stakeholder confidence in the veracity of your reporting.



SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATIONS

It is really important to communicate effectively about your sustainability programme. Done well, this can help considerably towards securing and maintaining public approval and goodwill.

There is, unfortunately, plenty of public disenchantment with the way sport is governed and administered currently. Clearly there needs to be some strong, positive messages to acknowledge relevant issues and to show that they are being addressed. At the same time, sport can still tap into a large amount of residual goodwill and create inspiring and engaging stories. Sustainability themes can be powerful elements of proactive communications and engagement strategies.

However, it must be remembered that sustainability is a subject that receives plenty of critical scrutiny. Modern history is littered with examples of organisations coming under fire for over-claiming or exaggerating their credentials in this field – often referred to as “greenwash”. That is not a reason to hold back from communicating, just a warning to be careful that what you do say is relevant, accurate and genuine. Do not just cherry pick

the good stuff and ignore inconvenient issues. Informed stakeholders will see through selective messaging, and ultimately you would lose the benefit of the good things you have achieved.

There is no entity, be it a company, organisation, city or government, that has an unblemished sustainability record. Anyone who claims otherwise is asking for trouble. What does matter, therefore, is presenting a sense of honesty, modesty and sincerity. This means acknowledging that you may not be experts in sustainability, that you recognise where you have impacts or issues, and that you are committed to doing something to address them. You will get credit for explaining how you are improving, or plan to improve, not for an assertion that everything is fine.

The best sustainability communications and reports convey a sense of learning, and openly share what challenges were encountered, what things worked and, most importantly, what did not work. Just like any great athlete, you get to the top only by learning from earlier setbacks. The struggle is the story, rather than a bold list of achievements. It is so much more human to convey a sense of journey and discovery, whether for sport or for sustainability.

THE BEST SUSTAINABILITY
COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS
CONVEY A SENSE OF LEARNING,
AND OPENLY SHARE WHAT
CHALLENGES WERE ENCOUNTERED,
WHAT THINGS WORKED AND, MOST
IMPORTANTLY, WHAT DID NOT WORK



USING SPONSORS AND ATHLETES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is often a subject of great interest to sponsor companies, and there may be opportunities via their communications channels to extend your messaging. In some cases, they might have products and services that could directly contribute to your sustainability programme, or it may be a matter of mutual interest in communicating about the subject and using sport as a powerful vehicle to attract interest.

It is important, however, to ensure that the sport and sustainability message remains clear, and that it is not lost in a commercial promotion.

Another tactic is to look for people who could boost the profile of your campaign as “sustainability ambassadors”. These could include people from outside sport who have a good public profile in environmental or social issues, and who know what they are talking about. Alternatively, sports bodies could use their inbuilt advantage to draw upon athletes to support the cause.

While athletes may not be experts in the field (although some are), many do care deeply about sustainability and can articulate their passion very well. This may be borne from their recognition that a healthy environment is important for their own wellbeing and athletic performance, or they may perceive sustainability through social issues they care about, such as inclusion and gender equality. Additionally, many athletes – just like their generational counterparts outside sport – are increasingly aware of global issues like climate change and how this could shape their futures.

Some campaigns use recently retired famous athletes; others may choose current, or up-and-coming athletes, or a mix of both. While the big names can command greater media attention, younger, contemporary athletes can bring a freshness and age group appeal that are more directly relevant and inspiring to young people.

Case study

Kiribati's first-ever Commonwealth Games gold medallist, David Katoatau, has been named as an Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) ambassador for climate change, as he seeks to raise awareness of the issue.



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND LEARNING LEGACY

Sustainability should be seen as a shared endeavour, even between otherwise sporting rivals or unconnected entities. Think of it as a global team sport. The goal here is for sport as a whole to get up to speed on sustainability, and this can best be achieved by sharing best practices and learnings.

There are formal knowledge-sharing programmes from one Olympic Games edition to the next, and this also happens in some other major events. But it is not a common phenomenon between different sports or countries. However, there are so many common elements to sustainability, such as sourcing, carbon footprinting and management systems, that it is a pity for different people and organisations to keep reinventing the wheel and following the same learning curve.

GETTING HELP

Only a few sports bodies will have the resources to justify their own in-house sustainability department. Most organisations will need to seek some external help and guidance, beyond what you can learn from

written material. In practice, this means three options: hiring specialist consultants, using knowledgeable volunteers, or partnering with other organisations for particular initiatives. The IOC now also offers an enhanced technical support system for all NOCs and IFs and can be your first port of call.

Consultants are most appropriate when you have a significant project, such as a major event, or refurbishing or developing a venue, and you need specific, professional help. Clearly, there would be cost implications, but these may be a necessary part of achieving the project in a good way.

Volunteers can be really helpful, but it does depend on whether you have access to people with the right level of knowledge and experience, and who are willing and able to be involved in a meaningful way. For small organisations, this is obviously an avenue worth exploring.

Another possible option is to see if there is available expertise among your sponsors, or even among your main suppliers. Other sports organisations might also be developing a sustainability programme, and it could be worth pooling resources and sharing experience and ideas.

SUSTAINABILITY SHOULD BE SEEN AS A SHARED ENDEAVOUR, EVEN BETWEEN OTHERWISE SPORTING RIVALS OR UNCONNECTED ENTITIES



Case study

THE IFA AND THE WFDF HAVE JOINED FORCES TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY FOR THEIR EVENTS

The International Fistball Association (IFA) and the World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) aim to place sustainable development at the core of their activities to create positive economic, social and environmental impacts through their operations and events. The limited resources of both IFs encouraged them to collaborate, sharing information and resources on different topics, including sustainability. As a result, they have been able to provide a higher level of support to their National Federations and Local Organising Committees.

The WFDF and the IFA began their sustainability collaboration in 2017 with three main initiatives:

1. Committing to sustainability as part of their governance: The IFs have included

content related to sustainability in their documents and reports, and have added sustainability-related criteria to the bidding processes for their events.

2. Providing resources for the development and implementation of a sustainability strategy: The WFDF appointed a Sustainability Officer to create and elaborate the necessary documents and sustainability tools for both IFs.

3. Conducting sustainability evaluations at events: The IFs developed a sustainability assessment template to evaluate various aspects of their events, including crowd circulation and transport, energy and water, waste, site selection and construction, noise, food, and other social questions.

Teaming up with local NGOs is potentially an excellent solution, as they can bring expertise and external credibility to the table. Often, NGOs and other bodies and experts will be willing to join in because they like sport and can be enthused by the challenge and opportunities of working in collaboration with your organisation. Sometimes, however, they may expect to be paid, and it is wrong to assume that they can be treated as a free resource.

Remember, too, that external organisations do not necessarily have the primary motivation for sport, or your particular sport, and may have other agendas. These may very well be mutually compatible, but it is important to be clear on the terms of reference at the outset before developing formal partnerships.

Most NGOs are specialists in one discipline, for example nature conservation, air quality, disability, education, human rights, etc. Few are working across the board, so for general sustainability guidance, you would be better off setting up an advisory group with a number of different interests involved.

If you have reached the point of identifying particular priority themes for your sustainability programme, this is where a deeper partnership with the relevant NGOs (as well as commercial partners, public agencies and academic institutions) could be very beneficial. Having a balance of inputs from different perspectives is usually stronger than just bilateral arrangements.



IOC SUPPORT

As part of the implementation of the IOC Sustainability Strategy, the IOC now offers an enhanced support system aimed specifically at the NOCs and IFs. This support system includes the following actions:

- **Written Guidance**

Education guidelines to help implementation of sustainable measures in easy-to-read formats. All written guidance will be followed up and supplemented with workshops for NOCs and IFs, as well as one-to-one support.

- **Knowledge-Sharing and Best Practice**

Identifying and sharing best practice, creating knowledge centres and providing specialist support when required.

- **Institutional Meetings**

Arranging collaborative meetings and educational workshops to provide a platform for those who want to share experiences.

- **Leveraging Partnerships**

Developing and managing partnerships with global experts and institutions to collectively deliver sustainable objectives and contribute to achieving the UN SDGs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The steps and guidance presented so far in this document should have given you a good appreciation of the positive value sustainability initiatives can bring to your organisation and its people, and the contribution this can make in a challenging world. Implementing sustainability will mean change, but in a way that can be hugely motivating and inspiring, as well as bringing practical and tangible benefits.

Hopefully, you will now have a good overall understanding of how to go about setting up a sustainability programme. It should be clear that sustainability requires a holistic approach that takes account of economic, social and

environmental aspects, and needs to be an integral part of how your organisation operates.

In the appendices, we have provided an introductory overview to the five focus areas of the IOC Sustainability Strategy. More detailed guidance on these topics will be published separately as part of the “Sustainability Essentials” series.

Of course, that is not the whole story. Each organisation – NOC, IF, or another type of sports body – will have its own particular circumstances and priorities. But we hope that, by sharing our insights, we will have encouraged you to look at this critical subject in a new light, and inspired you to take the next steps.

SUSTAINABILITY REQUIRES A HOLISTIC APPROACH
THAT TAKES ACCOUNT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS



6

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX 1: Practical focus areas
- APPENDIX 2: Sustainable events
- APPENDIX 3: Glossary



APPENDIX 1: PRACTICAL FOCUS AREAS

In this section we look at five topics. These are the main focus areas of the IOC's Sustainability Strategy but interpreted quite broadly, so that they are hopefully relevant to as many sports bodies as possible.

There is no obligation to follow all of the focus areas. We believe they offer a good framework for most sports organisations, but there is no one-size-fits-all approach to sustainability. It is therefore important for your organisation to focus on the priority topics that are most relevant to your particular situation.

It is also important to realise that, whichever way you identify and divide up your priority themes, they will nearly always have overlaps and connections. This is perfectly normal and is testament to the integrated and crosscutting nature of sustainability.

Some themes may appear more environmental, others more related to people; but regardless of which topic is being considered, there will normally be environmental, social and economic aspects to take into account.

In each section we explain why the theme is important, and we present a brief selection of actions for you to consider implementing. These are not complete lists, and nor is there an expectation that all sports bodies could implement each recommendation. They are intended as a menu of ideas to give a feel for the types of things you could do. More detailed guidance on these themes is being developed.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR
ORGANISATION TO FOCUS ON
THE PRIORITY TOPICS THAT ARE
MOST RELEVANT TO YOUR
PARTICULAR SITUATION



INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL SITES

Sport takes place across a vast range of settings, from indoor arenas and urban playing fields to open oceans, mountains and even deserts. Indeed, wherever sport takes place, there will be some interaction with the natural environment, and very often with local communities too.

In many sports there is a close connection with nature, either as a backdrop or as part of the field of play. Even sports that nowadays take place in more structured venues often owe their origins to natural places – e.g. canoe slalom.

Historically, therefore, many sports have a close affinity with nature and are influenced by environmental conditions. Conversely, the move towards more complex, designed venues has taken sport from being a benign activity to one that may cause significant environmental and social impacts. It is common for new venue projects to receive objections from local communities and/or environmental groups. Reasons for objection can be many and varied: perhaps due to fears of disruption and noise, traffic congestion, loss of local amenities or damage to cultural or natural heritage.

New venue development

Most sports venues are developed by private investors, sports clubs or public authorities. These may not be connected directly with NOCs or IFs, but you may well get drawn into debate and discussion on the issues, and it is important to be aware of these and advise accordingly.

There are too many cases where sports venues have been over-engineered or designed for one-off events without sufficient thought given to long-term economic and social value. Therefore, the first key principle for sports venue development should always be to ensure they have a viable long-term use. This can usually mean looking beyond the requirements of a single sport or sporting event and considering a range of potential activities (including non-sporting uses) over the venue's lifespan.

Temporary structures can be a solution where no permanent development is considered viable; but these too can be expensive construction projects in order to meet capacity and health and safety standards. Therefore, it is nowadays also recommended (as per the IOC's [New Norm](#)) to consider alternative, existing venues for one-off events.



This leads to the consideration of refurbishing old venues. Very often these tend to be wasteful in energy and water use and poorly accessible, so upgrading can be an opportunity to enhance their environmental efficiency and social value.

All cases will have their individual circumstances, but when selecting sites for new sports venues, the following points should be taken into account:

- New sports venues should not be developed within or immediately next to protected nature areas and cultural heritage sites.
- Avoid sites where development could exacerbate flood risk or impact on water catchment.
- Give preference to development on degraded or previously developed sites, so-called “brownfield” land.
- Seek locations accessible by public transport.

Having established potential locations for the development and the type of venue to be built, there are further important considerations relating to design standards (see box opposite).

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR SPORTS VENUES

There are many sustainability aspects to consider in the design of new sports venues and related infrastructure. Ideally, projects should conform to internationally recognised “green building” and “well building” standards, or their national equivalents, but these are not always applicable to sports venues and can add cost and complexity. However, as a minimum, new venue design briefs should specify the following guiding principles:

- conservation of the natural environment and positive impact on biodiversity;
- conservation of historic buildings and other cultural heritage;
- conservation of water resources;
- minimisation of energy use and of greenhouse gas emissions;
- minimisation of adverse impacts on land, water, noise and air quality;
- use of long-lasting environmentally and socially responsible materials;
- minimisation of waste and maximising reuse and recycling of materials;
- inclusive design;
- internal environments that foster health and wellbeing; and
- creation of opportunities to leave a positive legacy for local businesses and communities.



Management of existing venues

There is much that can be done to improve the sustainability of existing sports sites and venues. Older sports venues can be quite wasteful in energy and water use, and these are areas where relatively simple efficiency measures can offer substantial savings. Accessibility provision is also often lacking in older venues, and this can be harder to fix. Nevertheless, it is very important these days to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone; sport reflects modern society, and venues should not present barriers and exclusion to anyone.

Being a good neighbour is an important principle. Sports venues and events that attract large crowds need to consider impacts on local residents and businesses from traffic, noise, lighting, litter and security issues.

If there is spare, unused land, consider if there are opportunities to allow natural vegetation to develop, or even establish food-growing areas. Where space is limited, it is possible to vegetate walls and roofs, or simply erect nesting boxes for birds and bats, and even rooftop bee hives. These are all simple

projects that could involve input from the local community.

Land management for sport also presents sustainability challenges. This includes protecting watercourses and standing water bodies from run-off by fertilisers, pesticides, fuel and oil spillages and foul drainage. Turfgrass chemicals can also adversely affect natural vegetation, and on some sites large numbers of spectators can cause an ecological impact through trampling.

Mountains are among the most ecologically fragile environments and can suffer disproportionately high impacts from alpine sporting activities. Not only is there the direct footprint of ski runs, but the use of fertiliser in artificial snow-making can potentially impact natural ecosystems downstream through snow-melt run-off into the head of water catchments.

All of these impacts are avoidable, given careful planning and management to achieve the all-important balance between protecting natural ecosystems and creating excellent fields of play and an attractive environment for watching sport.



SOURCING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The purchasing of materials and equipment, their operational use and eventual disposal when no longer needed are usually treated as separate processes. This is the traditional linear model of buy, use and dispose. Sustainability is about connecting these three aspects to enhance lifetime value and minimise waste.

In fact, optimising the lifecycle of materials and reducing waste and the management of supply chain issues can be one of the most effective ways of addressing sustainability in any organisation. The starting point is to determine how you assess value, rather than purely base decisions on price alone.

You need to be confident in the quality of the goods or services you are buying, so that you get what you require. You need to consider if

there are any health and safety issues or other risks to take into account, such as potential reputation risk. It is also worth checking that you actually need the goods or services in the first place – in the world of sports events in particular, it is amazing how often things are procured that are either unnecessary or bought in too vast quantities, leading to additional cost and waste.

Key elements of sustainable sourcing

In essence, there are five key questions when sourcing goods and materials:

1. Where does it come from?
2. Who made it?
3. What is it made of?
4. What is it wrapped in?
5. What will happen to it afterwards?



Where does it come from?

This is about prioritising locally produced goods and supporting small businesses. How are the products transported and from how far away?

Who made it?

The issue here is to ensure that goods have not been manufactured under exploitative conditions. What are the working conditions in the factories where the product was made? Labour standards are a hugely important issue these days, and high-profile entities like sports bodies and sports event organisers can be under considerable scrutiny from campaign groups and the media.

What is it made of?

This is about ensuring that products have minimal impact on human health and the environment. It is good to give preference to products containing recycled materials and which are recyclable. Those containing or using toxic or polluting substances should be avoided. Equipment should be efficient in use, notably with regard to energy, water and consumables (e.g. paper, ink, lubricants, etc.), and low noise and vibration.

What is it wrapped in?

Packaging is a major issue in terms of waste management and resource use. Aim to minimise packaging wherever possible, and emphasise the need for recycled and recyclable materials to be used in packaging that is required. Suppliers should take responsibility for taking back and reusing or recycling their own packaging, but this does not happen automatically and should be specified in the contract.

What will happen to it afterwards?

The responsible disposal of goods and materials after their initial use is a key concern. If this is not considered at the beginning (i.e. when specifying requirements in tender documents), there can be a lot of unexpected costs in storage and disposal. Can goods be returned, donated, reused, recycled or otherwise reprocessed into something useful? By extending the useful life of goods and materials beyond their initial use you would be contributing to the “circular economy”, a rapidly growing discipline within the world of sustainability.

What is especially important is that these key questions form part of the tender specification and evaluation at the beginning of the procurement process. In this way, you can make more informed choices that appreciate “whole life” value rather than take a limited view on purchase only.



Certified products

Voluntary product standards and certification schemes can be an opportunity to go beyond minimum industry and regulatory standards, and develop greater public recognition and confidence in your organisation's approach to sustainability. There are many schemes covering a wide range of environmental, social, animal welfare, labour standards and other ethical criteria in sectors such as timber and timber products, food, clothing, minerals and electronic components. For sports equipment, there is the Responsible Sport Initiative being developed by the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry.

Some product certification schemes are country- or region-specific, while others are more widely available. In some categories, there may be more than one potential standard or certification scheme to choose from, and in some cases it is possible to have dual certification (e.g. some teas and coffees may be both Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance certified).

Services

For the provision of services involving labour, the focus should be on:

- pay and working conditions; and
- health and safety.

In relation to sport, this is particularly relevant in construction (for both permanent venues and temporary overlay for events), security, transport, catering and cleaning services. For further details, see the section on Workforce.

Existing suppliers and sponsors

Many sports organisations have long-standing partnerships with specialist equipment suppliers, sometimes on a sponsorship or licensing basis. While there is no suggestion of upsetting these arrangements, it is good to inform them about your sustainability policies and to seek collaborative ways to improve the sustainability

of the products and services they provide. It is also important to be aware of any risks that might arise if any of your partners are deficient in sustainability standards.

Whenever any such arrangements reach their term, it is good to renegotiate, or retender as for a normal procurement exercise, including all your sustainability requirements upfront.

Waste management

Waste is costly and unnecessary, and sport can produce a lot of it! The largest waste generators are likely to be venue construction sites and major event operations. Usually less in terms of volume, but a continual issue is daily waste from corporate offices and regular sports facilities.

Good practice in waste management is to follow a basic hierarchy, starting with the most preferable:

- Avoid waste wherever possible.
- Seek reuse opportunities for items that are no longer needed.
- Recycle what cannot be reused.
- Send non-recyclable waste to energy recovery if available.
- Dispose of residual waste in licensed landfill.
- Never allow illegal dumping and littering.

Much will depend on where you are situated. Places differ considerably in terms of what items can be recycled locally and the different disposal options available. Therefore, check what local market there is for different types of recycling. This should also inform your buying strategy – there is no point in specifying a certain recyclable material if there is no practical means of recycling it due to a lack of local infrastructure.



MOBILITY

Travel and transport of people

The sporting world is continually on the move. Whether for training, competition, meetings or other purposes, most people connected with sport do a lot of travelling. This has much value in bringing people together, and is one of the great social appeals of sport itself.

At the same time, travel-related carbon emissions represent one of the main environmental impacts associated with sport. While travel will always remain a vital part of the world of sport, there are several measures that could be put in place to limit these impacts.

- Increase sharing of vehicles to reduce number of vehicle journeys.
- Seek opportunities for virtual meetings rather than always meeting physically.
- Increase use of public transport rather than personal vehicles.
- Use fuel-efficient, low/zero-emission vehicles.
- For international travel, seek to optimise journey plans (e.g. some officials attend multiple meetings/events, which might be better combined into a single trip, rather than separate out-and-back trips).

- For long-distance trips, other measures may include:
 - Preferring direct flights
 - Informing travellers about the carbon footprint of their trips, as an awareness-raising measure
- Where practical, use high-speed trains rather than flights.
- When selecting venues for an event series, try to optimise travel times of teams/players, officials and fans.

Travel and transport issues are not exclusively a matter of carbon emissions. Large-scale events can often cause significant local traffic disruption and congestion, which in turn may lead to air quality issues, as well as disruption to local communities and businesses. Transport planning for major events must therefore consider such impacts, and organisers need to work with public transport departments and local authorities to seek effective solutions for minimising impact.

These may include allowing spectators and workforce to travel to an event only by public transport (possibly with price of transport included in event ticketing); encouraging “soft-mode” travel (cycling and walking); and adjusting the timing of the event to avoid peak travel times. In selecting venues for particular events, access by public transport should be a major criterion in the selection process.

Case study

Rugby World Cup 2011, New Zealand: a “Fan Trail” in Auckland allowed spectators to walk from the city centre to the stadium (about 4km), with entertainment from community groups, schools and performance artists, and stalls providing local food and drink along the route.



Moving goods and materials

Another related issue is the impact of freight movements. Sport involves much specialised equipment and athletes, and teams often need to transport their kit around the world. Freight is not limited just to sports equipment; sports events also require vast quantities of goods and materials that have to be transported to and from venues, and this can add substantially to the carbon footprint.

The impacts of freight are similar to those of transporting people, just different in scale and the types of vehicles used. Logistics managers therefore need to consider the environmental impacts of different transport modes and routes, and the social and economic impacts on host communities where large numbers of truck movements in and out of venues can cause localised disruption, noise and air pollution.

Measures to reduce the impact of freight logistics for events may include:

- location of distribution warehouses to allow the best route to venues to minimise impact on communities and optimise travel times;
- optimal loading of vehicles to avoid wasted journeys;
- operating a “quiet night-time delivery” policy;
- selecting freight suppliers that operate modern low-emission fleets and compensate their carbon emissions;
- where practical, using rail and river options instead of road transport; and
- for overseas freight, favouring sea freight over air freight, to significantly reduce carbon emissions.

In the case of touring teams and mobile events, the challenge is to achieve a balance of optimising what has to be transported each time and what can be used locally at the different stages of the tour. What might be saved on freight could be lost through waste from using local materials and equipment on a one-off basis.

This dilemma links closely to resource management considerations and applying the principles of the “circular economy” (see Appendix 1). This is another example of how sustainability is rarely a single obvious solution and requires looking at many variables to make an informed choice.



Sustainable tourism

Sport-related travel constitutes an important part of the wider tourism industry. While most countries and regions welcome tourism, it does bring with it a number of sustainability issues and impacts that can adversely affect host destinations and communities. These go well beyond the carbon emissions from long-distance travel mentioned above and include sensitivity to local culture and customs, protecting natural heritage and supporting the local economy.

The United Nations define sustainable tourism as: *“causing as little impact as possible on a destination’s social and natural environment, and fulfilling local economic needs while maintaining cultural integrity”*.

Sports organisations and event organisers can play an important role in this area by helping to raise awareness of sustainable tourism principles and specific considerations in host destinations where sports events and related activities are being held.

Specific actions to be considered include:

- Collaborate with local tourism authorities to identify potential risks and opportunities linked to sports tourism in their area – whether for one-off events, or regular sports tourism activities.
- Include information on responsible tourism practices relevant to the destination(s) in question alongside any promotional material provided to touring clubs, teams and individuals, spectators and other groups travelling on sport-related matters.
- Ensure that your organisation’s activities do not contribute to, or condone, any exploitation of indigenous communities and other vulnerable people, or protected and endangered plant and animal species.
- Choose tourism operators and hotels with environmental policies and community projects in place.

The United Nations World Tourist Organisation (UNWTO) and the World Committee on Tourism Ethics provide guidelines on how to become a more responsible traveller. Their top “Tips for a Responsible Traveller” (2017) brochure can be downloaded in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese and Arabic.



WORKFORCE

Sport and the Olympic Movement are above all about people and the physical, mental and societal health and wellbeing developed through participating and engaging in sport. The benefits of sport to public health and social cohesion are incalculable.

There are also many people whose working lives are linked to sport, and countless others who devote a large part of their leisure time to volunteering for sport. Their working conditions, health and wellbeing, and opportunities for personal development and learning new skills are really important.

The same duty of care also applies to temporary casual workers and volunteers, construction workers building sports infrastructure and those working for suppliers providing goods and services to sports bodies and for events. People should not have their lives or health put at risk because of their work; they should not be subject to discrimination, forced labour or any other abusive practices. The sports sector should be a standard-bearer

for fair, safe, healthy and non-discriminatory working environments. It should promote accessibility to training and education and encourage a positive work-home life balance.

In particular, we believe it is important for all Olympic Movement organisations to ensure decent working conditions and to respect human rights both for their direct workforce and for those working across the value chains upon which we all depend.

By the term “decent work”, we agree with the definition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; security in the workplace and social protection for families; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.



In terms of human rights, we refer Olympic Movement organisations to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP), which outline the human rights responsibilities of businesses, as well as references to anti-corruption standards. The Guiding Principles explain how commercial enterprises should assess human rights risks; take effective steps to avoid human rights problems; and ensure a remedy for abuses that occur in spite of those efforts. We have incorporated the application of these principles into the Host City Contracts for future Organising Committees of the Olympic Games and in the standard contractual agreements with our suppliers; and by extension, we believe that they are an important reference for other sports organisations.

Beyond purely workforce issues, sports organisations can play a valuable role in the development of inclusive and prosperous local communities, and can support efforts to increase social mobility through education and promoting leadership opportunities for women and young people.

Possible measures to implement

- Establish a working culture that is: non-discriminatory; provides equal opportunities for women and men; and reflects the diversity of the community where you are based.
- Provide access to guidance and training for staff on gender equality, disability awareness, healthy living, etc.
- Be vigilant about health and safety standards for all those working on your behalf – your staff and also those in your supply chain, especially working in construction and hospitality.
- Provide incentives for staff/volunteers to travel to work by public transport, bike or on foot, carpooling and ride-share schemes.
- When providing food, ensure there are healthy menu options, and increase the proportion of non-meat dishes.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to exercise regularly and participate in sport or other forms of active living.
- Consider how work experience in your organisation or event could help develop skills and education levels, especially for young professionals.
- Integrate sustainability into the performance objectives of directors and senior managers.



CLIMATE

There is no more pressing issue in the world today than climate change. Many low-lying countries and small island states face existential threats from rising sea levels and major flooding. In contrast, other countries are suffering from increasing desertification and prolonged droughts, leading to acute shortages of food and water for crop irrigation and drinking. In turn these impacts exacerbate poverty, hunger and inequalities among peoples, which can lead to displacement, migration of refugees and even conflicts.

In the face of such elemental challenges, the sports community may feel helpless. It is also being impacted directly: alpine winter sports are increasingly vulnerable to erratic or even no snowfall, while extremes of heat and lack of rainfall can lead to the loss of turf-based playing surfaces; and the increasing frequency of violent, tropical storms can destroy buildings and infrastructure.

Nature does not discriminate, but the impacts of climate change are most severely felt by poorer countries and communities. Although in physical terms it is an environmental phenomenon, climate change has massive socio-economic consequences, and is therefore clearly a major sustainability theme.

What is climate change?

Climate change is a large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures. Throughout geological history there have been tropical periods and ice ages, so climate change has been a continual, but usually gradual feature for all of time on earth.

Since the last ice age, which ended about 11,000 years ago, Earth's climate has been relatively stable at about 14 °C. However, in recent years, the average temperature has been increasing. Compared with climate change patterns throughout Earth's history, the rate of temperature rise since the Industrial Revolution is extremely high.

There is global scientific consensus that these modern temperature rises derive in large part from human activities, notably the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas), which emit so-called "greenhouse gases" (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide in particular), as well as the destruction of rain forests and other natural vegetation that serve as carbon reservoirs, or "sinks".



International protocols (see box on the Paris Agreement) aim to curb greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global temperature rises. This is why there is so much emphasis from governments, cities and corporations on cutting carbon emissions and developing clean technologies.

The effects of climate change are not simply warmer temperatures; in fact, a better term would be “climate chaos”, as this would reflect the increasingly unpredictable and extreme nature of weather events being experienced in recent times – floods, storms, droughts, heatwaves, extended winter freezes, etc.

PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

Concluded in December 2015 at the COP 21 Summit*, the Paris Climate Agreement is the world’s first comprehensive climate agreement. It came into force on 4 November 2016. It deals with measures to limit greenhouse gas emissions; mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change; and establish new financing mechanisms, starting in 2020.

The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to hold the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. This would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

Recognising, however, that impacts of climate change are already occurring and cannot be reversed instantly, the Paris Agreement also prioritises increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience, as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Emphasis is given to the need to increase adaptation support to parties most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

As of November 2017, 194 states and the European Union had signed the Agreement, while 169 states and the EU, representing 87 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified or acceded to the Agreement.

***COP 21:** *This was the 21st United Nations Climate Change Conference, literally the “Convention of Parties” to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The IOC participated in COP 21, and in particular in the Climate Summit for Local Leaders (one of a number of complementary events taking place in parallel as part of the COP 21), where the IOC President, Thomas Bach, addressed an audience of over 1,000 city mayors on the theme of how the Olympic Games can be a catalyst for sustainable development of cities.*



Measuring carbon emissions

If resources permit, it is good to calculate your organisation's carbon footprint (or inventory of greenhouse gas emissions). This is a technical exercise requiring specialist help and may not be practical for all situations. Where it is feasible, a carbon footprint calculation is useful in providing a baseline of your starting point, and will help identify in a more quantitative way priority areas on which to focus emission reduction efforts.

Even without this basis, there is enough intuitive sense of where most emissions are likely to be occurring to allow simple measures to be put in place as indicated in the five areas that follow and other thematic sections in this guide. Of course, without any quantitative measures you will lack a means of tracking progress, which in turn reduces your ability to communicate what you have done.

However, even without doing the carbon calculations, it should be possible to record the steps you have taken in a way that would allow for others in future to calculate the carbon savings if required. For example, you could monitor year-on-year changes in travel budget, or the number/distance of flights, car and rail journeys taken. Accurate purchase records of materials and equipment can also be very informative for assessing carbon impacts.

Reducing carbon impacts of sport

It is useful to think in terms of which activities related to sport can cause the most greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, and what measures can be implemented to avoid or reduce these impacts. Technically, this is referred to as carbon mitigation. Typically, these will include:

- **Travel:** flights taken by teams and officials, ground transport including official cars and buses, and shipping freight.
 - Implement a sustainable travel policy (see the section on Mobility).
 - Assess alternative means of moving goods and equipment to lower carbon impact of freight (see the section on Mobility).
- **Energy consumption:** heating, cooling and power used at sports venues and in sports organisations' offices.
 - Ensure existing venues and offices have an up-to-date energy-saving plan.
 - Specify energy efficiency requirements for new venues (see the section on Infrastructure and Natural Sites).
- **Materials:** e.g. timber for venue and overlay construction, or cotton for clothing or all fossil-fuel based materials, such as plastics (depending on where these are sourced from, there can be significant environmental impacts, which include increased greenhouse gas emissions).
 - Venue designs and fit-out specification should stipulate "low-carbon" materials (see the section on Infrastructure and Natural Sites).
 - Give preference to certified products (see the section on Sourcing and Resource Management).
- **Food and beverage:** catering at sports events (agricultural production, especially of meat is responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions, which are exacerbated where tropical forests and other natural lands are converted to farmland).
 - Introduce menus for staff and/or event catering that have a higher proportion of non-meat dishes, and source food labelled as being from environmentally responsible agriculture.
 - Minimise food waste through more accurate gauging of quantities required and working with charities to redistribute surplus food.



- **Waste:** sports events in particular can produce large quantities of waste, which if disposed of in landfills causes additional greenhouse gas emissions.

- Follow the waste hierarchy (see the section on Sourcing and Resource Management).

Compensating for unavoidable carbon emissions

In pretty well all cases, despite best efforts to reduce carbon emissions you will have a residual footprint. If air travel is part of your activities, you can be sure you will have a sizeable footprint. This residual footprint is an expression of your impact in terms of the amount of carbon emitted for a given activity (e.g. an event or your organisation's annual operations).

Many organisations seek to compensate for such unavoidable impacts by supporting other activities that create carbon benefits. These might include using your sporting connections to inspire others to reduce their carbon footprints, possibly through making pledges;

or you might directly support energy efficiency or renewable energy schemes, or replanting projects in your local area. These are all positive things to do, but it could be difficult to calculate the amount of compensating benefits realised unless they are part of some official scheme. The good thing is that you could be directly involved in the projects, which can bring wider benefits in terms of community engagement and goodwill.

The common alternative is to buy carbon credits through offsetting schemes. These vary in cost per unit of carbon offset, usually because of different levels of rigour in verifying the validity of the schemes and ensuring that they are providing genuinely additional carbon benefits. There are many options to choose from, both on the voluntary market and through official schemes. The latter tend to be more for major industries, so in the case of sport, most organisations and events would probably be better off looking at one of the voluntary, privately run schemes.



The advantages of using carbon offsets is that they are an easy way of mitigating your impacts, and you receive some form of certification to confirm the amount of carbon you have offset. The disadvantage comes in the sense that you are paying for projects happening somewhere else, unconnected with your activities, and there is little incentive for you to reduce your actual impacts. The harshest critics of offsetting liken it to “conscience money”.

There are several choices to make: to offset or not? If yes, do you offset your entire carbon footprint or a proportion of it, and through which scheme? Part of the decision will be based on how effectively you have been able to minimise your footprint through reduction efforts, and also on whether you need to invest in climate adaptation measures, as set out opposite.

It is worth considering schemes that provide wider benefits beyond simply mitigating carbon emissions. These may focus on biodiversity conservation, water resource management or other local community benefits, for example.

If you decide not to offset, do you have a sufficiently credible sustainability programme on other matters to enable you to withstand any criticisms on your stance against offsetting? It is not obligatory to be “carbon neutral” or to offset your emissions, but you need to be confident in your overall sustainability programme.

Adapting to climate impacts

This is about ensuring that the effects of climate change are taken into account in your future plans, whether for sports events, design and operation of venues, or your offices.

Potential actions can include ensuring that there is adequate provision of drinking water and shade for participants, workforce and spectators at events where hot conditions are likely, and providing basic information for people about avoiding heat stress (see also the section on Workforce). In some cases, it may even be necessary to adjust timings of competitions to avoid periods of extreme heat.

Design of new venues, or refurbishing old sites, should always factor in climate adaptation measures, including ventilation, orientation of buildings and natural landscaping – vegetation has an important cooling effect, as well as aesthetic and ecological benefits. Location of new venues should also assess potential risks from flooding and/or forest fires (see also the section on Infrastructure and Natural Sites).



APPENDIX 2: SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

Central to the concept of competitive sport is the organisation of events. These range in scale from small, local meets all the way to the Olympic Games, via a whole array of regional, national and international competitions and championships. As a rule, the larger the event, the more potential impacts on the environment and host communities; but at whatever scale, event organisers can take some essential steps to address sustainability issues.

Competitive events are the shop window for sport and the lens through which most people see and perceive sport, whether as remote spectators via TV and other media, or by being physically present at the venues. As such, events are a huge opportunity to use the inspirational power of sport to promote greater understanding of the role of sport in society and how it can be a force for social and environmental good.

This is true at whatever scale; and indeed smaller, locally focused events can be just as well – if not better – placed to demonstrate this point than the more amply resourced larger events.

The main elements to consider are:

- how people are going to travel to the event and access the venue;
- how to manage the venue to minimise use of resources and other impacts (e.g. energy efficiency measures, waste management and avoiding spills and leaks that could cause pollution);
- how to use opportunities to demonstrate sustainability through food and beverage, recycling and communications channels;
- how to ensure local communities are supportive and not inconvenienced (by litter, noise and congestion); and
- how to ensure a safe and secure atmosphere for all (participants, officials, media, workforce and the public).

Case study

GERMAN OLYMPIC SPORTS CONFEDERATION – GREEN CHAMPIONS 2.0 INTERNET PORTAL FOR SUSTAINABLE SPORTS EVENTS

This web-based tool, in both German and English languages, is for event organisers and other interested parties seeking information about practical actions for planning and delivering sustainable sports events. These measures can be downloaded as PDF checklists. The tool has a filter function and various selection criteria to enable users to customise measures according to the nature of the event in question.



SUSTAINABLE EVENTS – TOP TIPS

The following tips were originally developed by the London 2012 Organising Committee expressly for smaller-scale, individual events such as conferences, seminars, promotional launches and celebrations, as well as sports events.

Access

Ensure communication methods and physical access facilities mean everyone is welcome.

Local area

Look after your local community.
Try to reduce congestion, litter and noise.

Energy and water

Adopt measures to reduce your energy and water usage.

Transport

Walking, cycling and public transport are healthier and more sustainable ways to travel to an event.

Reduce and reuse

Buy only what is needed, and hire/reuse everything else.

Responsible sourcing

Try to support local businesses and socially responsible organisations.

Food and beverage

Try to showcase local, seasonal produce, and provide vegetarian options and free drinking water.

Keepsakes

Ensure giveaways are useful, reusable and/or recyclable.

Make it easy to recycle

Try to provide recyclable packaging and provide recycling and general waste bins.

Health, safety and security

A safe environment is a happy environment. Assessing and managing the risks in advance can help ensure that everyone can enjoy the event.

[Source: <http://learninglegacy.independent.gov.uk/documents/pdfs/sustainability/cp-london-2012-sustainability-guidelines-for-corporate-and-public-events.pdf>]



APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY

Term	Meaning
Additionality	Additionality is a determination of whether an action has an effect, when the action is compared to a baseline. This term is commonly used in carbon accounting to express whether a beneficial effect is genuinely the result of your action (i.e. it is additional), or would have happened anyway without your intervention.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity is defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Carbon footprint	A carbon footprint is the total set of greenhouse gas emissions caused by an individual, event, organisation or product, expressed as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO ₂ e). The carbon dioxide equivalent allows the different greenhouse gases to be compared on a like-for-like basis relative to one unit of CO ₂ .
Carbon offset	A carbon offset is a reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gases made in order to compensate for or to offset an emission made elsewhere. Carbon offset schemes allow individuals and companies to invest in environmental projects around the world in order to balance out their own carbon footprints.
Circular economy	Today's linear "take, make, dispose" economic model relies on large quantities of cheap, easily accessible materials and energy, and is one that is reaching its physical limits. A circular economy is restorative and regenerative by design, and aims to keep products, components and materials at their highest utility and value at all times. (https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/overview/concept).
Ecosystems	Ecosystems are the complex system of plant, animal, fungal and microorganism communities and their associated non-living environment interacting as an ecological unit. Ecosystems have no fixed boundaries; instead their parameters are set to the scientific, management or policy question being examined. Depending upon the purpose of the analysis, a single lake, a water catchment or an entire region could be considered an ecosystem.
Ecosystem services	The benefits people obtain from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as spiritual, recreational and cultural benefits; and supporting services such as nutrient cycling that maintain the conditions for life on Earth.
Environmental stewardship	The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices.
Global Reporting Initiative	GRI is an independent international organisation that has pioneered sustainability reporting since 1997. GRI helps businesses and governments worldwide understand and communicate their impact on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights, governance and social wellbeing.
Greenhouse gases	Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are called greenhouse gases. The principal greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO ₂), methane (CH ₄), nitrous oxide (N ₂ O) and fluorinated gases, such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).



Term	Meaning
Legacy (in the context of sports events)	Legacy encompasses all the tangible and intangible long-term benefits for people, cities/ territories and sport arising from the staging of an event.
Materiality assessment	The term materiality comes from the financial world. Conducting a materiality assessment is an exercise in stakeholder engagement designed to gather insight on the relative importance of specific environmental, social and governance issues. This helps companies determine where to focus their energy and resources, and which activities matter most from a sustainability perspective.
Maturity matrix	Maturity matrix is the term given to evaluating the state of development of a particular process or programme. At its simplest, it can be just a paper-based checklist; but in whichever form, it is a good tool for rating the current state of development of your programme, and then repeating the process at a later date to determine if you have made progress.
Olympic Movement	The Olympic Movement comprises individuals and organisations guided by the Olympic Charter and led by the International Olympic Committee. These include National Olympic Committees and International Sports Federations, as well as athletes.
Overlay	Overlay is a term that is used to describe the temporary elements that are added to more permanent buildings to enable the operation of major sporting and other events. These elements provide additional facilities for the duration of an event and are generally of a lightweight construction, as they are often removed afterwards.
Supply chain	A supply chain is the entire process of making and selling goods, including every stage from the supply of materials and the manufacture of the goods through to their distribution and sale to customer.
Sustainability	A way of working in accordance with one's vision and values that ensures decision-making that takes account of feasibility, while maximising positive benefits and minimising negative impacts on people, communities and the environment.
Sustainable Development Goals	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators approved in 2015 that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the period through to 2030.
Sustainable sourcing	Sustainable sourcing is the procurement of products and services with environmental, social and ethical issues in mind.
United Nations Global Compact	The UNGC is a voluntary initiative based on the commitments of chief executive officers to implement universal sustainability principles and to take steps to support UN Goals. Although focused on businesses, membership is also open to a wide range of non-business organisations such as NGOs, cities, international institutions and associations.
Water catchment	The area drained by a river and all its tributaries.

Table 3: Glossary of terms