

Guidelines for hosting sustainable MICE events





Introduction

MICE brings a high economic ripple effect on the host city, along with legacy effects, such as greater name recognition and brand power in the region, business opportunities, and the creation of new ideas and technologies. However, on the other hand, it has been pointed out that there are aspects that have many social and environmental burdens, and sustainability has become a key theme in order to lessen and reduce these burdens. According to a survey by the Japan Tourism Agency¹⁾, sustainable initiatives are increasingly being included as a requirement when overseas organizers invite applications from the public. This suggests that such initiatives are becoming necessary to win business. In addition, the scope of sustainability initiatives is expanding to the supply chain*, and it is analyzed that collaboration with stakeholders* and local communities is necessary. These indicate that promoting sustainable MICE as city-wide initiatives is becoming increasingly important.

In 2008, Sapporo City declared its aim to be “Green Capital, Sapporo” and has been promoting sustainable city planning through measures to reduce environmental impact. In order to become a sustainable city in MICE, we believe that promoting initiatives with the understanding and cooperation of everyone involved in MICE (organizers, participants, and business operators) will increase our city’s increased international appeal.

Against this background, in order to grasp the current state of the environmental impact of MICE, we measured the greenhouse gas emissions generated from MICE events held in the city, exchanged opinions with business operators and sustainability experts, examined measures required for sustainable MICE events, and created these guidelines.

Through these guidelines, we hope to work with everyone involved in MICE to ensure that Sapporo City remains the preferred choice for the world as a sustainable MICE venue with minimal social and environmental impact.

We ask that everyone involved in MICE make use of these guidelines and understand and cooperate with our initiatives.

* Supply chain: the entire process that includes the acquisition of raw materials, manufacturing, and sales.

* Stakeholders: Interested parties who directly or indirectly impact an organization and its project activities

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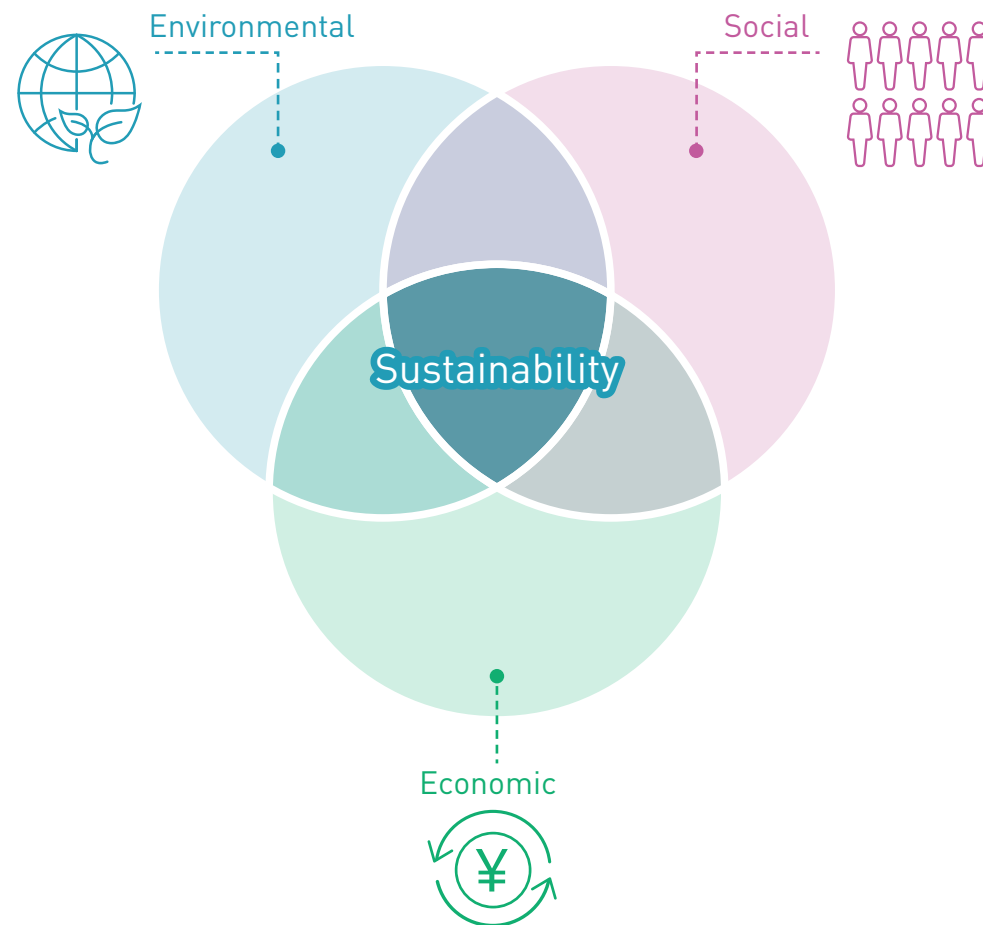


What is sustainability?

Sustainability is a concept that aims to create a society in which the environment, society, and economy develop sustainably into the future without losing their current values.

The concept of sustainability gained attention in the 1987 report²⁾ on sustainable development by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. Since then, people have begun to see that economic development and social and environmental sustainability are not necessarily opposing concepts, but can be compatible.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 have prompted various entities to work on these goals toward 2030. The Ministry of the Environment has created a "Guide to the Utilization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"³⁾ for companies. The guide states that companies need to pursue management and business development that support sustainable development. For example, it highlights the importance of companies adopting sustainability-focused initiatives and emphasizes that their efforts toward achieving the SDGs could improve their corporate image and unlock potential business opportunities.



Sustainable business development is based on a healthy balance between the three elements of the environment, society, and economy.

[Environmental]: To ensure that the capabilities of the planet are protected

[Social]: To ensure fairness and respect for society

[Economic]: To ensure that profits meet the needs of the environment and society

Source: "Barcelona sustainable events guide" by Barcelona Convention Bureau



Holding sustainable MICE events

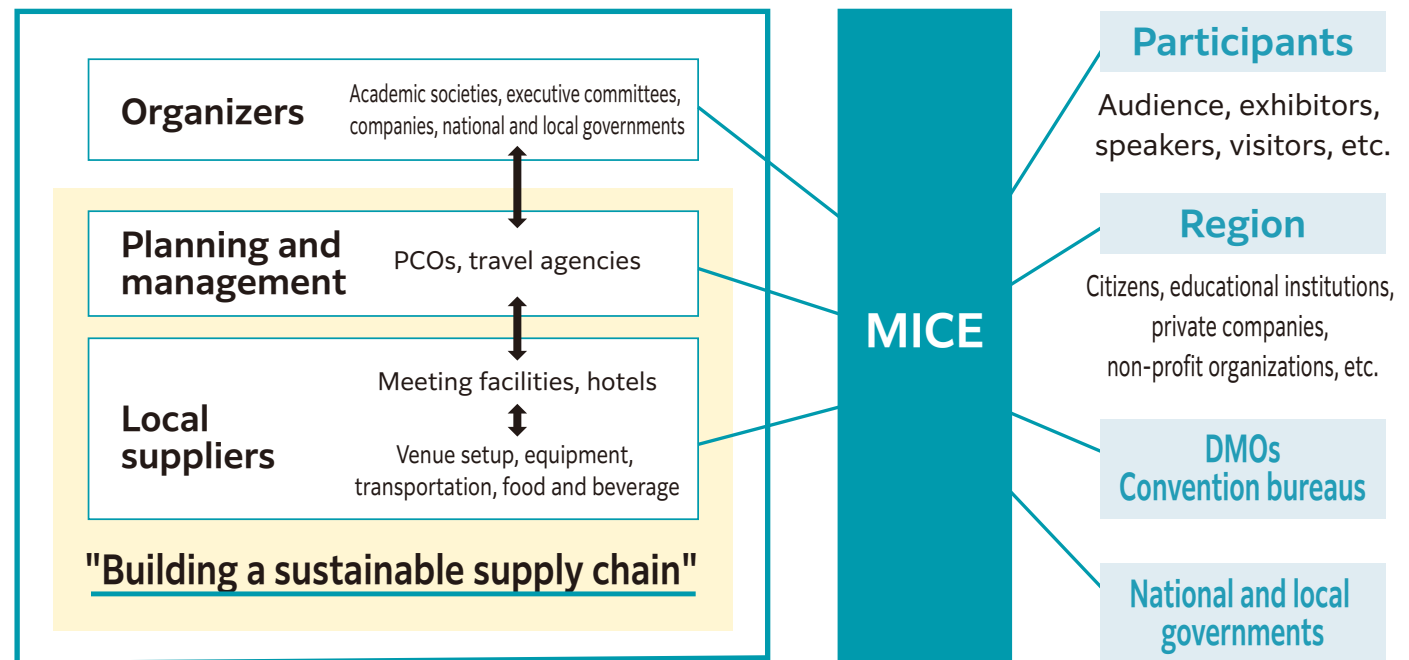
The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a sustainable event as “one that is designed, planned, and implemented to minimize potential negative impacts and leave a useful legacy for the host city and all other stakeholders involved” ⁴⁾.

In 2012, the International Organization for Standardization announced ISO 20121⁵⁾, an international standard for holding sustainable events. It is used for mainly international conventions, exhibitions, and sporting events, including MICE events.

In recent years, the holding of sustainable MICE events has attracted a great deal of interest from organizers, and host cities are required to create a host environment that meets the needs of such organizers. For this reason, it is necessary for the business operators involved in MICE and the host cities to be aware of sustainable MICE events and work together.

Stakeholders involved in MICE

There are many different stakeholders for MICE because it encompasses a wide range of industries, including venues, accommodation, food and beverage, and transportation. Sustainable MICE events can be achieved not only when each stakeholder continues to make efforts to formulate a policy on sustainability and promote initiatives respectively, but also when they start "building a sustainable supply chain" with business partners by sharing such a policy and working together.





Overseas advanced examples of sustainable MICE

Host city working to improve the host environment

Bangkok, Thailand, has been strategically working to improve the host environment, including formulating a sustainable MICE policy in 2012, and is actively **promoting the acquisition of third-party certification for local business operators and networking among stakeholders**. In recent years, the city has also joined the GDS-Index (see page 6) and has received high scores in the supplier and DMO categories, and the efforts of business operators involved in MICE have been highly evaluated.

Creation of a Sustainable Master Plan⁶⁾

In 2016, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau led the creation of the Sustainable Destination Master Plan.

The plan announced the goal of strengthening a framework for promoting sustainable MICE initiatives over the next five years, including collaboration among stakeholders and governance by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau.



Support for obtaining third-party certification⁷⁾

The city assists hotels and MICE facility operators in Thailand in obtaining ISO20121 certification. It provides subsidies for some expenses and creates educational programs for obtaining the certificate.

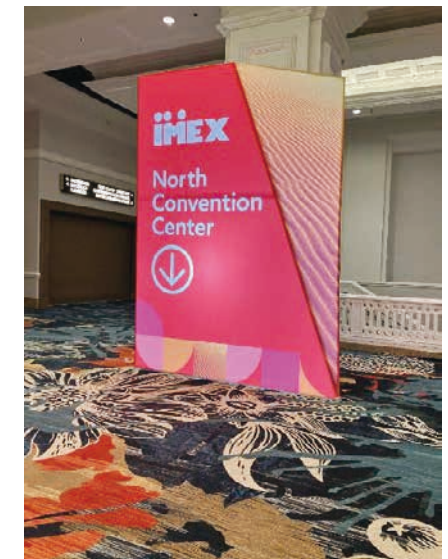
Sustainable event policies and initiatives by an organizer

IMEX Frankfurt and IMEX America, the world's largest MICE trade fairs, are held annually, and a sustainability report for each event is published⁸⁾. **In addition to calling on exhibitors and participants to take action, the organizers themselves worked with specialized consultants to establish an implementation policy of sustainable procurement and measurement of waste and CO₂ emissions, which has been implemented** for several years. Furthermore, **the organizers grasp the procurement method of food and beverage and waste disposal method**, thereby **ensuring that sustainable efforts are taken throughout the supply chain**.

▼ Goals for the event



▼ Fabric signboard





History of Sapporo's sustainability

Sapporo has been working on sustainability for a long time. The current focus is the promotion of energy-saving buildings, the introduction of renewable energy, and promoting the utilization of hydrogen energy, thereby aiming to achieve a zero-carbon city by 2050 in order to realize a decarbonized society. In addition, the city is participating in the GDS-Index (see figure below) for MICE events and actively working toward the ideal state of the city and its realization of the "Sapporo City SDGs Future City Plan" by setting goals.





Current state of MICE sustainability in Sapporo 1

With the cooperation of the organizers and operators of MICE events held in the city, the city collected information on the energy consumption of the venues, the status of equipment and supplies arrangements, the transportation of participants, meal arrangements, etc. and measured CO₂ emissions¹⁰⁾, and then examined measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from MICE events.

CO₂ emissions survey

Prerequisites

- CO₂ emissions in "Transportation" are calculated based on the distance traveled. The emissions for other items are based on the amount of money arranged. Cases where energy or waste emissions are unknown are excluded.
- The emissions from air travel in and out of Sapporo City were generally high, but these were excluded from the total emissions. **We used the figures excluding those emitted outside the host city so that we could focus on the emissions that could be controlled by the host city.**

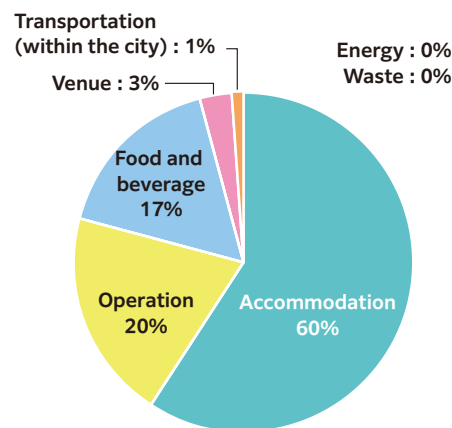
Case example 1

International conference A:
Total emissions: 6,809 t

Event duration: 4 days | Number of participants: 800

Venue: Sapporo Convention Center

Emissions excluding those from air travel : **255t**



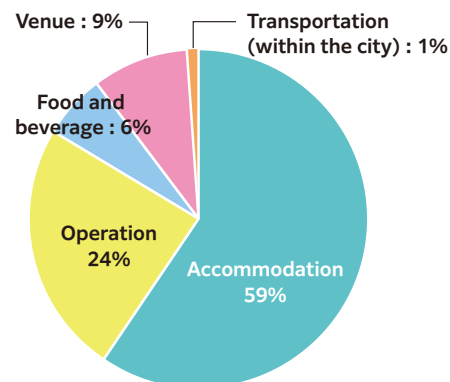
Case example 2

Domestic conference:
Total emissions of 510 t

Event duration: 3 days | Number of participants: 1,800

Venues: hotels in the city

Emissions excluding those from air travel : **228t**



[Survey results and analysis]

Venue

While the proportion of emissions from the venue was small, **CO₂ emissions could be further lowered if the venue improves efficiency (water saving, power saving, etc.).**

Energy

Since the Sapporo Convention Center uses renewable energy, **CO₂ emissions were virtually zero. This suggests it is possible to host environmentally-friendly MICE events depending on the type of energy a facility uses.**

Accommodation

Excluding air travel, the emissions from accommodation account for a high proportion, **making the effects of reduction efforts show more easily than in other areas.**

Operation

The emissions in this area tend to be high due to the construction and video equipment arrangements involved in venue decoration and exhibitions. **Procurement from local business operators and the use of supplies available at the venue can reduce CO₂ emissions from transportation, etc.**

Food and beverage

The trend in food and beverage varies from conference to conference, but **local production for local consumption is expected to reduce CO₂ emissions from the transportation of ingredients while utilizing the brand power of food.**

Waste

The figures were low due to the progress of paperless operations and **the fact that the amount of waste the management office was able to grasp was small.** In order to reduce waste, it is important to accurately grasp the emissions of the supply chain, including the current state and disposal methods.

* The figures for energy and waste are excluded due to a lack of data for measurement.



Current state of MICE sustainability in Sapporo 2

Sustainable initiatives implemented in Sapporo City

Here are some examples of sustainable initiatives conducted by organizers and business operators, as found in the CO₂ emissions survey.

Case example 1

International conference A
(4 days, 800 participants)

Initially, the plan was to transport fixtures and equipment from overseas, but since air transportation from overseas emits a large amount of CO₂, the plan was changed to procure within the city after consultation with local operators and organizers, which significantly reduced CO₂ emissions. In addition, the conference's website guided participants to the hotels that implement sustainable initiatives, lowering CO₂ emissions from accommodation.

Case example 2

International conference B
(8 days, 1,500 participants)

The Sapporo Convention Center, where the event was held, uses 100% renewable energy for electricity. Even though 88,532 kWh of electricity were used during the conference, CO₂ emissions were approximately 47,400 kg less than if conventional electricity had been used.

Case example 3

Domestic conference
(3 days, 1,800 participants)

Active use of local ingredients for the set menu for social gatherings reduced CO₂ emissions during the transportation of ingredients. Other MICE events also offer set menus using Hokkaido ingredients, so efforts to leverage the brand power of food are becoming a characteristic of Sapporo.

Comparison with the case where fixtures and supplies are transported by air from the U.S.



Comparison with the case where conventional electricity is used



5 out of 9 courses used Hokkaido ingredients

⇒ 55% of the set menu is locally produced for local consumption

The results of this survey showed that in order to hold sustainable MICE events, it is important to clarify what initiatives can contribute to the reduction of CO₂ emissions emitted by local business operators and promote initiatives. The findings also indicated the importance of promoting cooperation and understanding among organizers and participants concerning initiatives.



Lead cases for creating guidelines

In December 2024, the 20th World Winter Cities Association for Mayors (WWCAM) conference was held in Sapporo (Sapporo Convention Center and other venues), with the participation of mayors and other representatives from 21 cities and organizations from 8 countries. We will introduce this conference as a lead case for sustainable MICE in the city. In addition to unique initiatives, this is because it was the Sapporo City International Affairs Department that served as the secretariat for the conference, and it implemented initiatives based on the draft checklist for the guidelines.

Initiative 1 Upcycling of waste oil

At the 20th WWCAM conference, waste oil generated in the process of preparing and serving meals for receptions was converted into biodiesel, which was then used to generate electricity for the “Sapporo White Illumination,” an event held at Odori Park in the city around the same time.

When the secretariat explained this initiative to the hotel in charge of the reception, they agreed with its purpose. Furthermore, not only the hotel that served as the venue but also its affiliated hotels provided waste oil generated around the same time. The collected oil was processed at the collection company's factory and then sent to the Illumination operator. This initiative was implemented smoothly because the business operators involved had an understanding of the initiative.

During the observation tour for the participants of the conference, they visited the Illumination site and learned about the initiative of upcycling waste oil.



Initiative 2 Sustainable souvenirs

At this conference, congress bags and other souvenirs were handed out to the participants.

The WWCAM is an international network under the slogan “Winter is a resource and a treasure,” where winter cities around the world learn from each other about urban planning. The main theme of the 20th conference was “New Possibilities of Winter Cities: Realization of a Sustainable Society.” The participants gave presentations and discussed what new possibilities winter cities have in the pursuit of a sustainable society, on topics including the environment, urban development, tourism, and culture and art.

Against this backdrop, the secretariat prepared sustainable souvenirs, such as congress bags made of fair trade cotton, and reusable items, such as stainless steel bottles and bamboo cutlery. These demonstrated the characteristics of Sapporo City, which is a fair-trade town.



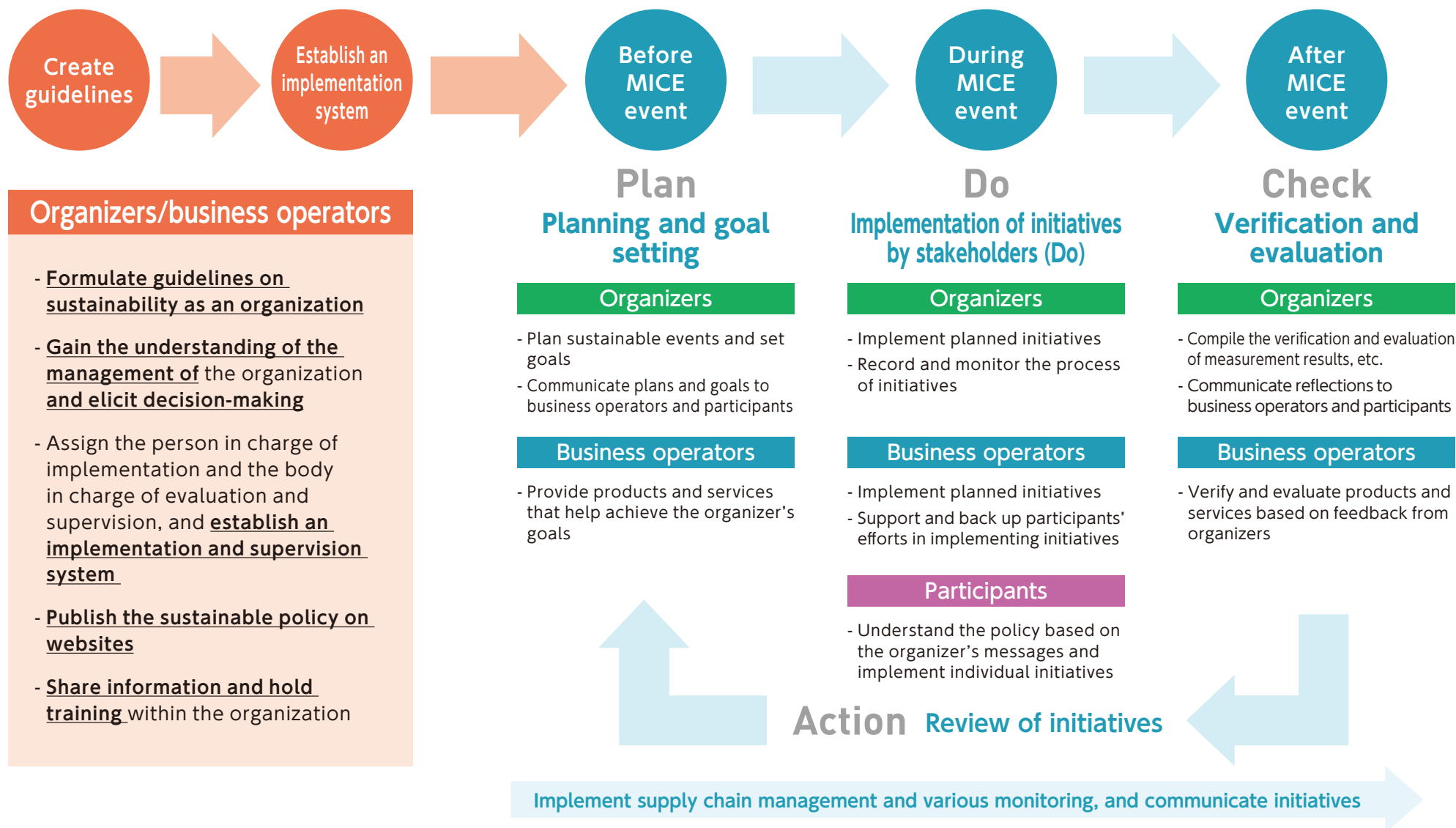
In response to the formulation of the guidelines (message from the conference secretariat)

When the checklist for the guidelines was formulated, we learned once again that there were various sustainable perspectives and initiatives. We also realized that consideration of the diverse food cultures of the participants could be more effectively promoted as a sustainable initiative. In addition, we felt that society has changed despite our previous impressions. For example, the cost of sustainability-conscious souvenirs was not so different from that of conventional ones. We thought that reviewing and considering the content of the guidelines at an early stage of preparation for the conference would broaden the scope of sustainable initiatives. The content of this conference was well received by the participants, and we hope that everyone involved in MICE will use it as a reference for their initiatives.



Process for holding sustainable MICE events

When holding MICE events, each organizer or business operator should develop basic guidelines as an organization, as well as systems and a policy to address sustainability. The PDCA cycle should then be repeated for every event: setting plans and goals (P), implementing specific initiatives (D), verifying and evaluating initiatives (C), and reviewing initiatives (A). This process will enable the organizer to hold more sustainable MICE events and allow business operators to provide products and services that meet the needs of the organizer.





Structure of the checklist

In order to serve as a reference for the formulation of sustainable policies, the consideration of the initiatives' contents, and the implementation of initiatives, we have created a checklist of recommended initiatives based on examples of advanced cities overseas, the requirements of third-party certification systems, and the initiatives implemented in Sapporo City and local business operators.

Guidelines

We placed the guidelines at the beginning of the checklist. This is because, when addressing sustainability, clarifying the fundamental stance and approach will enable the policies of each issue to be established in the same direction, and sharing the guidelines throughout the organization will allow everyone to work together.

Overview and general

The checklist describes the four indicators of society, environment, economy, and information dissemination that are necessary for formulating a sustainable MICE initiative policy.

Initiatives in social activities



- Contribution to the host city
- Promoting DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)

Initiatives in environmental activities



- Measurement and reduction of CO₂
- Measurement and reduction of waste volume

Initiatives in economic activities



- Development of a policy for creating a sustainable supply chain
- Contributing to the revitalization of the regional economy

Information dissemination



- Communicating the sustainable event policy to external parties

The checklist describes the initiatives' contents for each area involved in holding MICE events based on the above policy. (excerpt)

Venue

- Use renewable energy
- Reduce water and energy usage
- Reduce the use of disposable containers, etc., and put up signs to help people sort their trash
- Communicate sustainability efforts

Transportation

- Use carbon offset donations, etc. to reduce CO₂ emissions for travel to Sapporo, which requires air travel
- Improve the efficiency of movement within Sapporo City through public transportation, etc. to reduce CO₂ emissions

Accommodation

- Use renewable energy
- Reduce water and energy usage
- Reduce amenities and replace them with environmentally friendly products.
- Communicate sustainability efforts

Construction/ goods arrangement (procurement)

- Reduce and control waste by omitting or replacing decorations and handouts
- Select local business operators and those that provide sustainable products

Food and beverage

- Reduce and recycle waste by measures such as managing the number of meals to be served and converting food waste into compost.
- Reduce CO₂ emissions from food transportation through local production for local consumption
- Consider food diversity through extensive menu items

Side programs

- Leave legacy effects on the region by making the content related to the culture of the host city and its citizens
- Hold programs that have positive impacts on the host city and widely disseminate them, thereby improving the significance and public awareness of the conferences

The difficulty level of each initiative is set according to the criteria shown to the right. Please use them as a reference when deciding on the priority orders for initiatives to implement.

Basic

Advanced



Basic
Medium
Advanced

Basic initiatives (those that have almost no economic or human costs)
Those that can be implemented with each company's ingenuity
Advanced: High-level initiatives that are required by the certification system, and those requiring hardware maintenance

Implementing entity

We prepared checklists for each entity type, categorized as shown to the right.





How to use the checklist

Please use the checklist as a self-analysis tool to grasp the current state of the sustainable initiatives, and when deciding on policies and initiatives' contents. For the specific flow of use, please refer to the figure below.

Further, organizers could use it as a communication tool when choosing sustainable business operators. Business operators can showcase their implemented initiatives, products, and services listed in the checklist, potentially unlocking new business opportunities. We highly recommend referring to this resource.

