



Green Music Australia Info Sheet

Festivals - Avoiding Emissions

Avoiding environmental impacts in the first instance comes down to good planning – and good planning is what makes good festivals! Festival producers, site managers, production managers and food and beverage managers are, as a rule, problems solvers. Avoiding environmental impacts is no different from other issues, it just requires a slightly broader approach.

Avoiding emissions fall into four broad categories:

1. Festival scope;
2. Transportation linkages;
3. Sponsorship & merchandise; and
4. Influencing fans.

Festival Scope

Getting the balance right for a festival is critical. How big is the event footprint? How many fans are attending? What sort of ratio of services such as food outlets and toilets will be provided? How much parking space is required? How many stages, etc?

Each of these questions comes with its own environmental logistics. As a festival producer or manager, factoring in environmental questions at the planning stage can allow you to avoid substantial impact on water, air and our global climate.

The scope of the festival is probably the most important question of all when determining how best to avoid excessive emissions. By considering the following points you can host a successful, environmentally sensitive music festival which artists actively want to play at and which fans exhaust all options to get their hands on a ticket to the event:

- Most festivals are well established and have secured a suitable festival site (or sites in the case of national or touring festivals). If you are establishing an event, one of the most significant carbon avoidance strategies you can employ is securing a site close to public transport such as a bus or rail line. If you are serious about avoiding emissions, this point cannot be overstated;
- If you have already secured your festival site(s) investigate ways of maximising public transport options (this aspect is discussed in more detail under transportation linkages);
- Optimise your site density - find that balance between patron comfort and safety and the physical spread of the site. The larger the site footprint, the more travel, infrastructure and



energy generation solutions are required (i.e. if you can host a successful event with less stages, this will greatly reduce energy demand requirements);

- Avoid excessive production and perimeter lighting where feasible;
- For multi day festivals with camping, avoid providing bonfires. While they provide fantastic ambience they generate significant tonnes of carbon emissions (which are entirely unnecessary);
- When designing the festival layout, try and keep back of house infrastructure such as cool rooms and generators to a bare minimum (obviously after you have factored the necessary peak loads into the equation);
- Develop policies and procedures for suppliers. For example, prohibit certain materials coming onsite (which may have a high embedded carbon load such as fossil fuel based plastic, i.e. plates, cutlery, cups, etc); and
- Oh and finally, shout it out loud and proud that you give a damn about climate change and you expect people playing, working or attending the festival to do their bit to limit the event's carbon footprint.

Transportation Links

Getting to and from a festival represents the single largest carbon emitting component of any music event. In fact, punter travel emissions can outweigh a festival's internal emissions (lighting, freight, generators, etc) by more than 10:1.

Tackling the transportation aspect of a festival is critical to best practice environmental management. These simple suggestions can go a long way to improving your festival's footprint:

- Avoid providing too many car parking spaces. Where you have to provide a certain amount of car parking, price it so people will think twice about commuting via private transport;
- Work with local and regional transport authorities to encourage punters to travel by public transport and avoid the use of privately owned vehicles;
- Allocate more of your dedicated car parking to buses rather than cars;
- Provide some form of mass transit for artists and crew to get to and from their accommodation to the festival;
- Avoid operating your event at times when public transport does not operate.
- Help fans avoid taking their private cars by offering a combined event and public transport ticket or providing and publicising safe cycle parking.
- Where possible operate the event during daylight hours and avoid having to light the festival during large parts of the night.



Sponsorship & Merchandise

Environmental impacts escalate as a festival's consumption increases. While in today's world sponsorship and merchandise provide an important income stream, that doesn't mean accepting every commercial proposition that comes across your desk.

Product distribution by sponsors at many festivals is reaching epic proportions. While some fans get a buzz out of a free soft drink, the reality is you as the festival producer are stuck with the cleanup bill (collecting thousands of empty and partially empty product packages) and the environmental impact is really substantial.

Of course, there are smart ways to work sponsorship and merchandise into the equation. From an avoidance perspective here are a few ideas:

- Avoid sponsorship deals that require distribution of their product which is wrapped in non recyclable materials or packaging;
- Include a cleanup clause (with a cost attached) in your agreement so that sponsors will think twice about the types and quantities of products they propose to give away. The more waste they create, the more they should pay;
- Look into sponsorship of environmentally positive programs, like water refilling stations for reusable bottles;
- Avoid entering into sponsorship arrangements with companies that have poor environmental credentials. For example, if they (or part of their supply chain) are responsible for deforestation, do you really want to be associated with them?
- In fact while on the credentials front, why not check out the track record of all your sponsors, merchandise providers and suppliers. You might be surprised to find out who your real bed fellows are;
- Avoid sponsorship arrangements that require elaborate marketing and signage displays (as they are usually made out of energy intensive materials and more often than not are throw away after the festival);
- Investigate the material inputs that go into your merchandise products. Avoid materials that are non recyclable, non biodegradable, fossil fuel based or which have excessive packaging;
- Avoid buying merchandise that has to travel half way round the planet. It is not a good look to tell fans you care about climate change but by the way, the band or festival t-shirts have travelled 2,500km by air (all 10,000 of them).



Influencing Fans

People who attend festivals are usually incredibly loyal fans. Many of them undertake loads of research about their chosen festivals. Fans scour festival websites, blogs and social networking sites trying to get all the latest information and news.

Festival producers therefore have an enormous opportunity to influence fans to avoid unnecessary environmental impacts, both in relation to attending their event as well as their daily lives outside of music events.

Many festivals have specific environmental programs and policies aimed at tackling waste and emissions and increasing recycling rates. Some festivals take it one step further and include a host of information covering the environment even when it is not directly attributable to the festival itself.

To influence your fans to avoid environmental impacts you can help raise awareness by:

- Partnering with not-for-profit environmental organisations for onsite campaigning;
- Providing relevant information about how fans can avoid environmental impacts at the festival (i.e. buy encouraging people to avoid buying heavily packaged products, etc);
- Taking it one step further and providing information about how fans can avoid environmental impacts in their day to day lives (this could simply involve listing a bunch of "hot tips" for fans to implement around the house such as installing energy efficient lights or raising the air conditioning setting by a degree or two, etc);
- Publishing relevant web links to government and non-government sites dedicated to tackling environmental issues. There is a wealth of information on the internet and helping direct fans to useful sites can head many punters down the road to becoming energy wise citizens (by the way check out the Green Music Australia links page).