

# CASE STUDY ABOUT THE CREATION OF A ROADMAP FOR A SUSTAINABLE EVENTS DESTINATION

CREATED BY POSITIVE IMPACT



## INTRODUCTION

In late 2014, as the team and vision for Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games (GC2018) was entering the key planning phase, General Manager of Venues and Services, Ian Whitehead recognised an opportunity for the GC2018 and the Gold Coast event community to show leadership in following existing international best practice and providing an example of how to do so.

This case study is a story of best practice which all events could follow. This case study tells the story of how a major event used globally recognised frameworks to engage their event community and how legacy in the form of a sustainable event destination has the potential to exist after GC2018.

## THIS CASE STUDY IS SPLIT INTO 3 SECTIONS:

- 1 Understanding global best practice frameworks for a sustainable event.
- 2 Why and how GC2018 engaged stakeholders on the subject of sustainability.
- 3 The potential future for the Gold Coast as a sustainable event destination.

The creation of this case study has been made possible by the Queensland Government's 'Embracing 2018' Legacy Program, with the intention that it will be used by events around the world to learn from and follow the leadership delivered by GC2018 and the Gold Coast Event Community.

### GRI EOSS INDICATORS

A framework used by businesses around the world to report on their sustainability initiatives. There are 13 indicators that have been identified.

### WHAT IS ISO 20121?

ISO 20121 Event Sustainability is a management system standard that has been created for the implementation of sustainability in the events industry. It is a standard that is specific to the event industry so it can be used by suppliers, venues, event organisers, caterers etc. Following the framework of the standard will mean that sustainability (economic, environmental and social impacts) are considered at every decision point in the planning of an event.

## 1 UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL BEST PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS FOR A SUSTAINABLE EVENT

For an event to deliver best practice, there needs to be a recognised best practice way to work, and a recognised best practice way to report the results of this way of working.

In 2014, both these things had existed in the event industry for only two years, in the form of ISO 20121 and the Global Reporting Initiative Event Organiser Sector Supplement.





## ISO 20121

In 2012, London hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games and wanted to demonstrate that they had planned their event with maximum consideration for the positive impact they could have in the world.



Event Professionals are familiar with following checklists or specific requirements to achieve a goal, however the organisers of London 2012 were revolutionary and astute in their approach.

Their vision created a culture (or way of working) so that the social, economic and environmental impact was considered at every decision point during the planning of the event.

ISO 20121 was the management system framework created which, when followed, creates a culture for sustainability.

## UN Sustainable Development Goals

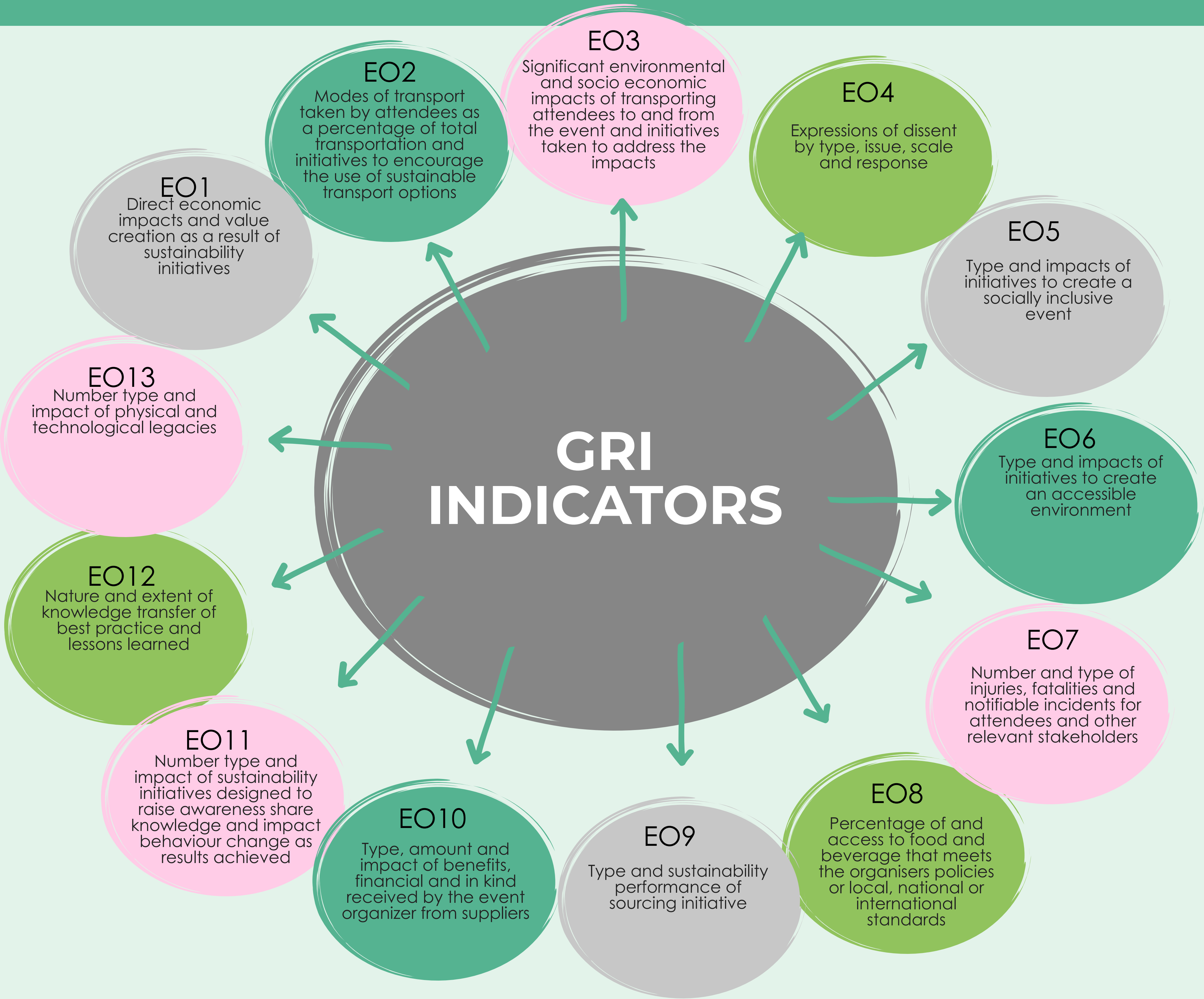
In 2015, the launch of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals provided an additional resource. While not specific to events, the UN Sustainable Development Goals offers a roadmap for global governments and businesses to work towards the creation of a world that works for everyone.

The clear and practical nature of each goal (e.g. zero hunger, responsible production and consumption) is useful for the event industry as a way to identify which sustainability issues are relevant to their unique situation.



## The Global Reporting Initiative Event Organiser Sector Supplement

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) frameworks have been used by businesses around the world to report on their sustainability impacts. There are always many items that GRI asks you to assess, what is material to your event, and then report on that. Understanding what is relevant to your event is also the approach in ISO 20121. From 2010, GRI gathered a group of event professionals to identify indicators (or items to report on) which would be relevant for all events. 13 indicators were created.





# Understanding ISO 20121

- Part of the process requires you to identify the issues which you are specifically facing.
- Objectives and targets are created to address your specific issues.
- Stakeholder engagement is vital to ensure continual progress and that optimal objectives and targets are being identified and addressed.
- Mistakes will happen and things will not go to plan so part of the approach is to review these experiences and learn from them.



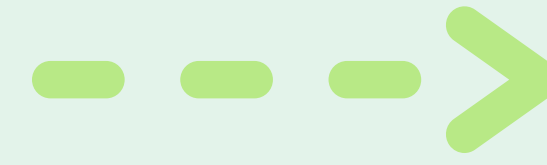
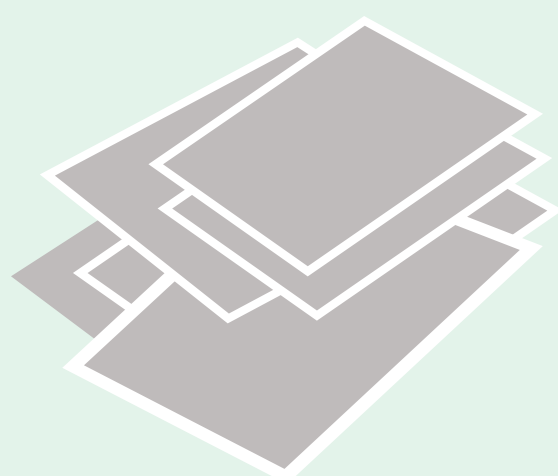
GC2018 INTERESTED  
PARTIES ENGAGEMENT



## 2 WHY AND HOW THE GOLD COAST 2018 COMMONWEALTH GAMES ENGAGED STAKEHOLDERS ON THE SUBJECT OF SUSTAINABILITY

It is not normal practice (yet) for event organising committees to open their doors and ears to public input. Engagement with interested parties (often called stakeholders) is a requirement for implementing ISO 20121 and as such an increasing number of event organisers are growing in confidence and asking those who they often expect critique from, to collaborate with them.

This engagement ensures that the objectives and targets chosen are the most relevant. For example, the organizing committee of a major event may decide that paper waste is the biggest issue that they had to address. Without the engagement of interested parties there would be no stage in the process where anyone could challenge this. Input from a wide range of sources, interests, and expertise will create a strong foundation for collaboration.





Starting in 2014, GOLDOC held an annual stakeholder event. The event included opportunities for interaction and engagement with different stakeholders from the supply chain, the local community, local NGOs and others. It provided an opportunity to hear an update on progress, and to give input on potential sustainability issues. These findings were used to inform the approach of the GC2018 sustainability strategy.

## 5 Learnings on how to Engage with Stakeholders

1

In addition to assembling an invite list of internal and external people, it is good practice to have a few 'open seats', i.e. people who hear about the event via your website or social media, and can register to attend.

2

Schedule as many opportunities as possible to listen to your stakeholder's opinions, and make the most of their unique expertise.  
E.g. cover the walls with flip-charts, and ask attendees to write down their ideas.

3

To facilitate groups of people sharing their insights and ideas, invest in an independent facilitator. They can encourage positive conversation, address negative input, and keep the event aligned with its agenda.

4

Remember, that it is okay for people to have differing opinions and to disagree. It is not the role of the event organisers to decide who is right or wrong.

5

Ultimately, people will want to be involved and help you address your challenges.

## 5 Examples of why Engaging with Stakeholders Made a Difference to the Gold Coast

1

Over time, the community became familiar with meeting and collaborating, and understood that they were part of a community developing the Gold Coast to be a sustainable event destination; a goal which would continue long after GC2018 had taken place.

2

More people, who are passionate about sustainability in the Gold Coast area, experienced being engaged and being informed.

At a community business event in 2016, an attendee raised a critique about the sustainability initiatives of GC2018. Another event attendee responded to and resolved this critique with their personal experience after attending stakeholder engagement events.

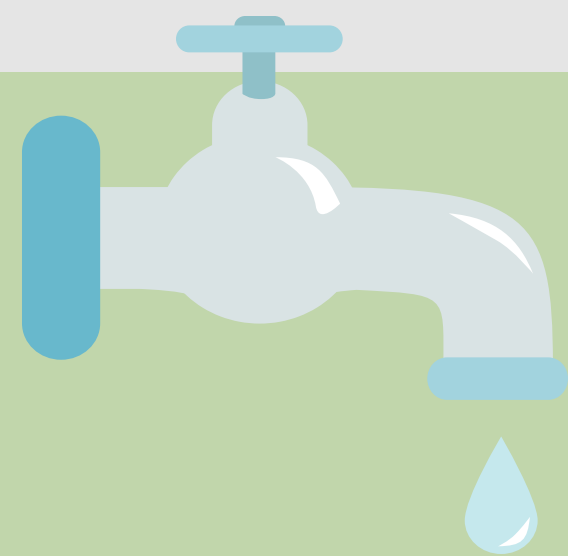
Instead of a very typical event organiser/stakeholder critique dynamic taking place, a collaborative conversation happened.





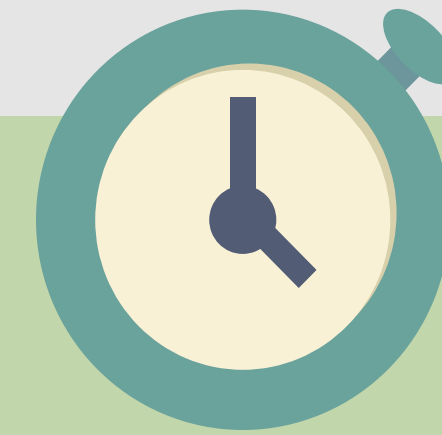
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Every year, stakeholders were engaged in a process to identify what issues were the most significant and possible for GC2018 to address. However, stakeholders took action separate to GC2018, which made initiatives like a balloon ban and focus on providing drinking water easier to implement.



4

The annual stakeholder engagement event also served as an opportunity to showcase what a 'sustainable event' could look like. Local food was served, creative and recyclable signage was used, opportunities for accessibility were demonstrated.

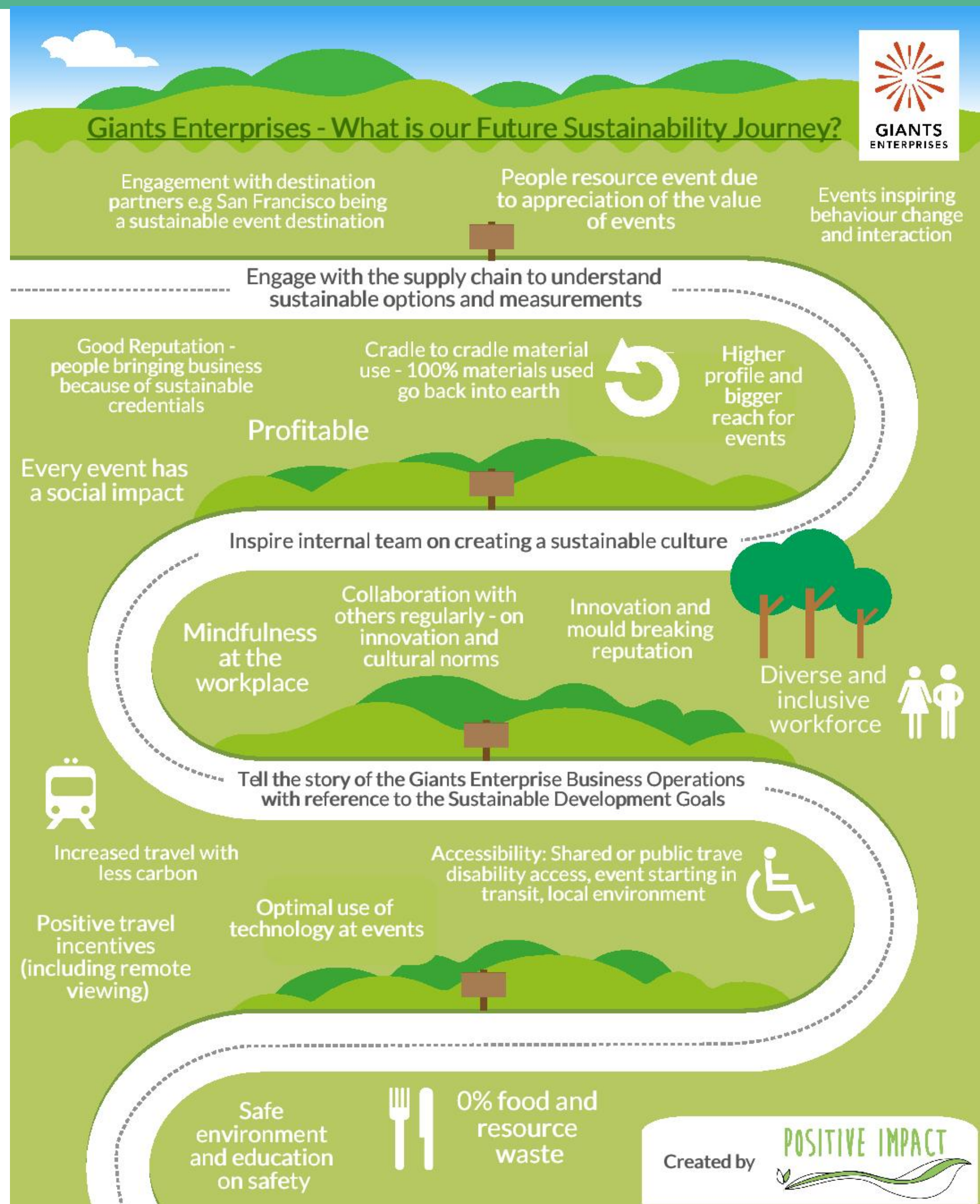


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Gathering stakeholders every year provides a timeline for the internal team to take action and gather results to be able to share, this helps to raise the importance of sustainability initiatives within the event organizing committee.

## Embracing 2018

The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games is about more than a spectacular sporting event. It is also about the opportunities and benefits that hosting the Commonwealth Games will bring to the Gold Coast and all of Queensland before, during and after the event.



This is an example roadmap created by the San Francisco Giants. The aspiration is that the Gold Coast event community will create and share their roadmap as a way to have a shared vision for a sustainable event community, and to attract new events to be held on the Gold Coast.

## 3 THE POTENTIAL FOR THE GOLD COAST AS A SUSTAINABLE EVENT DESTINATION

By May 2018, GC2018 will have been delivered, and GOLDOC's sustainability team will disband.

May 2018 does not need to be the end of the conversation on the Gold Coast being known around the world as a sustainable event destination. During the annual stakeholder engagement events held by GOLDOC, it became clear that the community was inspired and able to continue the conversation on sustainability beyond the GC2018 event.

A sustainable events working group started to form in late 2017, and the Gold Coast event community gathered to create a roadmap for the Gold Coast as a sustainable event destination.

The intention with the roadmap was to discuss a document which reflected broad input, and could act as the foundation for ongoing actions towards the goal of being a sustainable event destination. There is no 'end point' in being sustainable, yet having a vision and aspirations for the future will ensure people keep moving forward.



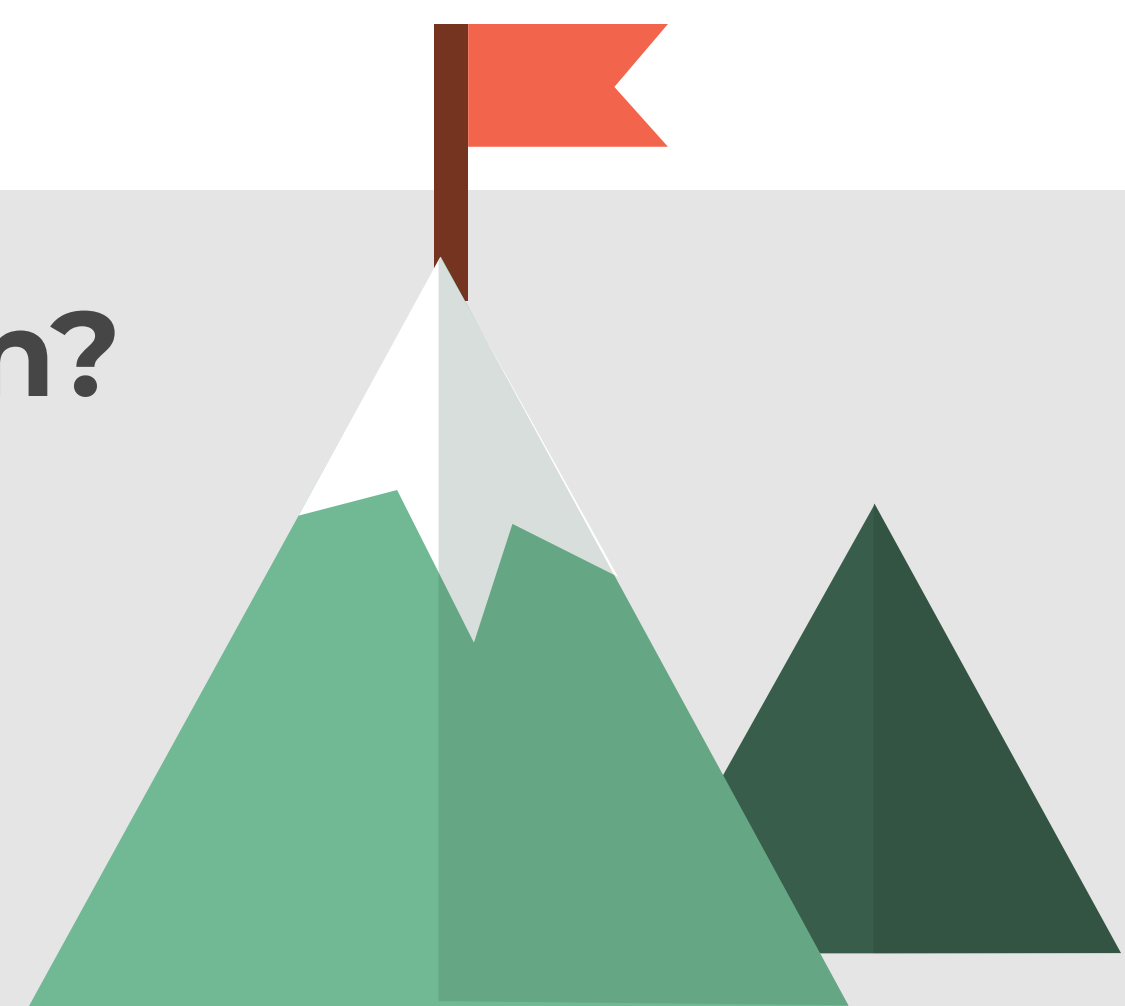
The roadmap concept is by not for profit Positive Impact, an organization which exists to provide education and collaboration to create a sustainable event industry and during 2018 Positive Impact will be sharing over 100 roadmaps with the global event industry.

These roadmaps will visually depict how a journey towards fully sustainable practices can be broken down into steps, which can then be effectively implemented. This will inspire others to map out their own sustainability plan.

By May 2018 case studies will be available on the Embracing 2018 website and social media, alongside information and stories of GC2018's commitment to greater sustainability and information on how ecoBiz Queensland (a Queensland Government funded programme) can support Queensland's organisations to implement sustainable practices.

## What does it mean to be a Sustainable Event Destination?

A sustainable event destination is a place which is in action to ensure that decisions taken when planning events optimally consider the social, economic and environmental impacts.



## What are the Potential Benefits of Being a Sustainable Event Destination?

Every year business, sport and cultural event organisers choose where they will hold their events. The concept of sustainability is of growing importance as people start to understand the potential damage to their reputation if their event demonstrates negative environmental, social or economic impacts.

If a destination can show evidence that the community of suppliers who will be used to deliver the event (e.g. hotels, conference centres, local council etc.) are in action to be sustainable, the event organisers will know their reputation will be protected, even enhanced, and their attendees will experience the many benefits of taking a sustainable approach.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Gold Coast events community have the enthusiasm, expertise and opportunity to continue to meet regularly to update their roadmap and tell their story of being a sustainable event destination to the world.

There is an opportunity for them to use their unique position to 'win' business, sport or cultural events for the Gold Coast, ensuring increased economic benefits and an increased incentive to continue on their sustainability journey.

The momentum generated by these positive impacts has the potential to be a global best practice example as event destinations around the world look to build strategies to attract events to their destinations.