



USA TRIATHLON GUIDEBOOK TO SUSTAINABILITY

A Strategy for Positive Stewardship, Responsible Management, & Effective
Preparation for Efficient and Sustainable Events

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Introduction

Welcome to the USA Triathlon Guidebook to Sustainability

This document is a collaboration between USA Triathlon and Brian Boyle (ASU School of Sustainability). The guidebook provides advice for race planning efforts at both the owned and sanctioned levels to deliver sustainable results in economic prosperity, environmental management, and social equity improvements. The steps provided in this guidebook will address the negative consequences associated with improperly managed events while satisfying the growing demand for sustainability efforts.

The guide applies the Responsible Event Framework, existing green event guides, academic articles, interviews with subject matter experts, industry-based research, and firsthand experience working in sustainable event management.

Due to the variety in settings and scale of owned and sanctioned events, the USA Triathlon Guidebook to Sustainability has been developed in a flexible manner, allowing for application and adaptation to any triathlon event.

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Background

All events create an ecological footprint, requiring travel, consuming energy, water, food and materials, and producing waste and carbon emissions. Furthermore, events impact host communities by leaving behind positive or negative legacies in terms of economic outcomes and equitable access to participation.

The sport of triathlon is not exempt from the challenges faced in managing events. USA Triathlon (USAT) serves as the governing body for the sport of triathlon in the United States. With over 400,000 members, USAT is the largest multisport organization in the world. USAT is responsible for managing five national championship events and sanctioning another 4,300 events on an annual basis. Without a sufficient sustainability plan in place, USAT events are susceptible to widespread environmental impacts along with undesirable social and economic outcomes.

What is sustainability?

This guidebook works with the following definition of sustainability:

“Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.” – “Our Common Future”¹

Applied to triathlon, this means that USAT-owned and sanctioned events, race directors, and planners need to account for a range of economic, social, and environmental impacts that the development and operation of their events may create.

How do race directors and planners sufficiently operate events within responsible environmental, social, and economic boundaries? That is precisely the mission of this guidebook.

Mission: Equip USAT leadership, race directors, and planners with the tools and resources to operate sustainable race events while ensuring a net positive event legacy void of negative environmental, social, and economic externalities.

¹ <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

Why Do We Need Sustainability in Our Events?

Climate change poses threats to infrastructure, public health, and well-being. All aspects of which the sport of triathlon is dependent upon to operate. These threats pose potentially significant financial repercussions, in addition to creating physical and logistical challenges in event planning. With a growing and robust platform, USAT is well-positioned to display industry leadership and influence through engaging actively and collectively to take meaningful and transformative sustainable action. Furthermore, the value of sustainability efforts extends beyond the scope of mitigating the effects of climate change.

Value of Sustainability²

- Financial Savings: A result of resource efficiencies in energy, water, and waste.
- Attract Sponsors: Attract interest through aligned sustainability efforts.
- Attract new Host communities: Being sustainably conscious provides reassurance to host communities that events will deliver positive outcomes.
- Attract Fans and Athletes: Sustainability efforts resonate with many fans and athletes and can enhance the experience and willingness of event participation.
- Enhance Brand Reputation: Well informed sustainability efforts will receive positive feedback, including favorable media articles, local community achievement awards, and overall customer appreciation. Simultaneously, a successful sustainability effort will mitigate the risks of negative athlete and customer comments or feedback that could end up on social media sites, etc.
- Build local economic growth³: Prioritizing local business when hosting events can cut down on long, global supply chains but also contribute to local economies, thus encouraging communities to welcome USAT. ("USAT champions local economies").

Climate Change & Sport

Although this guide focuses on strategies to reduce impacts of USA Triathlon events, the organization and event planners need to be aware of the potential effects of climate change on sports. The impact of a changing climate will vary from region to region; however, the following list provided infers some general implications for the sport of triathlon⁴:

- Damage to roads and pathways used for running and cycling due to extreme temperatures, extended periods of drought, flooding, and/or pest species extending their natural range

² <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/Game-Changer-report.pdf>

³ [The Importance of Sourcing Locally](#)

⁴ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Sports_for_Climate_Action_Declaration_and_Framework.pdf

- Damage to infrastructure due to violent storms
- Coastal erosion and sea-level rise directly affecting events held in coastal settings
- Unseasonal rainfall forcing cancellation or abandonment of events
- Heatwaves forcing changes to events
- Race cancellations or inability to travel to races due to inclemently weather and extreme weather events
- Increased injuries to athletes and spectators due to heat exhaustion
- More potentially harmful algae blooms threatening swimming venues

Event planners must acknowledge these challenges and monitor a changing climate to plan for and prevent potential financial losses and mitigate negative physical and logistical repercussions. Sports organizations are currently accounting for climate change, most notably the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who stated that climate change now plays an underlying role in host city selections and how the games will operate moving forward.⁵

Advice: Ensure that event locations remain viable from both a human health and infrastructure perspective. Consult with doctors and climate experts when in doubt.

Quick Links

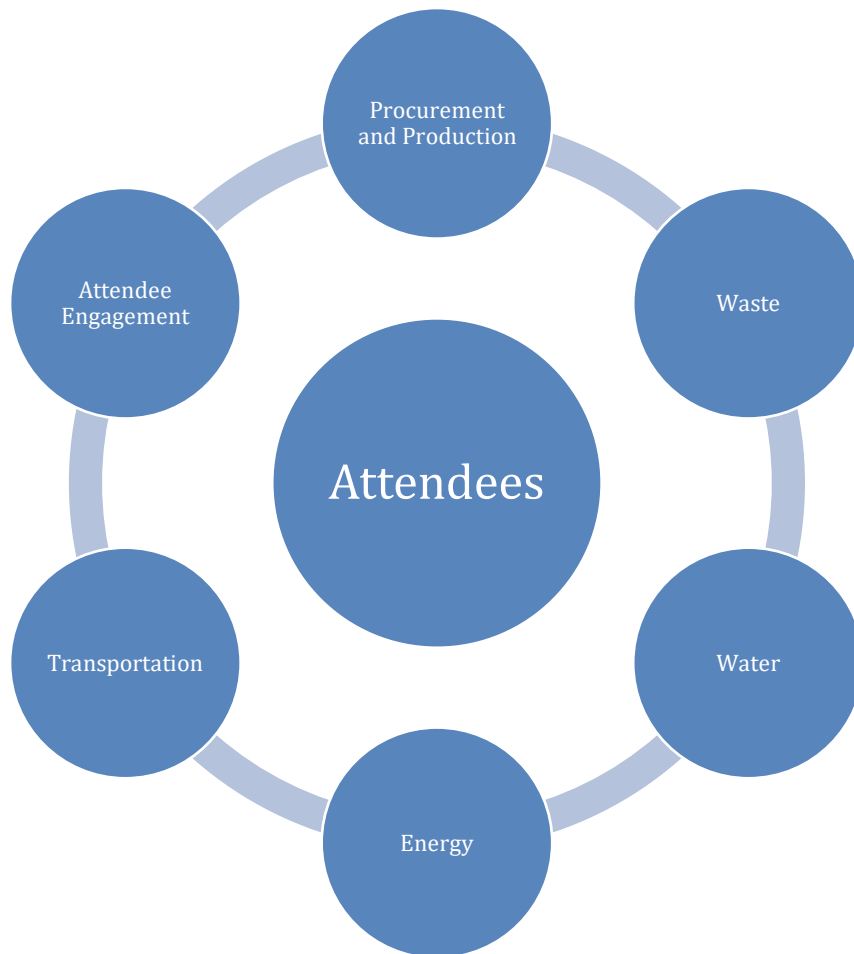
- “Olympic Marathon Moved out of Tokyo over Heat Concerns” - [2020 Tokyo Olympic Marathon](#)
- “[The National Climate Assessment](#)” – Academic report that details analyses of global climate change, including natural environment, land and water resources, human health and welfare, and transportation. The report breaks down by regions of the United States to better understand potential place-based impacts.
- [En-ROADS](#) – Interactive temperature increase tool relative to energy policy and technological innovation. This useful educational tool should USAT decide to advocate for climate action/policy. Refer to [this](#) GreenSportsBlog article for context.
- [2 Degrees Celsius: Beyond The Limit - Facing unbearable heat, Qatar has begun to air-condition the outdoors](#)
- [Previewing "The Last Game": Using Hockey to Show the Impacts of Climate Change on the Arctic](#)

⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/climate-change-turns-up-heat-on-sports/>

Events as a System

USAT events are systems that require inputs and create outputs over a fixed duration of time. Taking a systems perspective ensures a more holistic approach to sustainability by accounting for all stakeholders and resources required in event operations. The components of USAT event systems are highlighted below. All components have their own unique set of impacts and solutions. The guide will address each component, including best practices, resources, and key performance indicators.

Event Components



Process

The USAT Sustainability Guidebook incorporates a five-step process: Visioning & Goal Setting, Operations, Attendee Engagement, Reporting & Marketing, and Collaborations.

Visioning

Creating a vision for the ideal sustainable triathlon event sets the path toward a desired state by providing direction and motivation in managing for positive outcomes.

A unified vision can be created for all owned and sanctioned events or can be designed based on the desired outcomes of individual events. A vision should be a broad statement of overall ambitions, providing the foundation for how sustainability will integrate into event management.

There is no specific way to write a vision. However, it should be specific to USAT (or your sanctioned event), its mission statement, and its activities. It is useful to understand the potential impacts associated with events for the vision to represent real opportunities to reduce them.

Equally important is to ensure the vision aligns with the five principles of sustainability, meaning that it: protects nature, ensures the well-being of people, provides economic opportunities, and does not harm communities or future generations.

Depending on the scale of the event, it may be useful to include members from all different parts of event management and operations to ensure acknowledgment of all components. Moreover, creating a shared vision promotes ownership of goals and encourages collective participation.

An example vision statement could look like:

“Our vision is to provide an exceptional event experience to our athletes and fans while cultivating positive environmental, social, and economic impacts for all stakeholders within the local community.”

The Five Principles of Sustainability⁶

1. Viability and integrity of Ecosystems
2. Human and Social Well-being
3. Equitable Economic Opportunity
4. Justice Across Societies
5. Justice for Future Generations

⁶ Wiek, A. (2015). *Solving Sustainability Problems – Tools for a New Generation of Sustainability Professionals*. School of Sustainability, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Goal Setting

This guidebook will provide Key Performance Indicators for each operational component of triathlon events. However, events will vary considerably due to size, attendance, resources, and location. Therefore, specific goals should be established on an event-by-event basis, dependent upon event-specific variables. Apply the following steps in goal setting for events:

Step 1: Set Specific Goals

- Start with achievable goals and identify opportunities for “low-hanging fruit.”
- Decide on targets (e.g., eliminate all single-use plastics vs. reduce single-use plastics by 50%) — the more specific, the easier to judge success.
- Identify what outcomes determine success. How will this success be measured?
- Determine the best approach to communicate goals with all relevant stakeholders and everyone they may affect.

Step 2: Delegate Responsibilities

- Determine who is responsible for each goal
- Communicate responsibilities and expectations, so roles are fully understood

Step 3: Determine Timing of Execution

- When will targets be achieved? In the planning or operational stage?
- If possible, work with a timeline and include milestones.

Step 4: Achieving Objectives

- Implement actions that were planned and delegated.
- Adjust to unforeseen roadblocks whenever possible.

Step 5: Measuring Success and Reflecting

- Analyze the success of goals (e.g., waste diversion rates or carbon emission reductions).
- Reflect on successes, failures, and challenges.
- Learn and grow – what can be adapted in future events?

This guidebook acknowledges the role of Race Directors and how setting aggressive sustainability goals might be overwhelming for some sanctioned events. As an alternative, refer to the sustainable event checklist and one-pager for implementation guides that can easily integrate in the event planning process. Over time, Race Directors and organizers should aim to increase sustainability goals with each event to encourage continual improvement.

Examples of goals achieved at other events

Carbon Neutral, Zero Waste, Attendee Education, 100% Local Vendors, Charitable Donations, and Plastic Free.

Operations

Energy

Events rarely are provided the convenience of a "plug-and-play" option for sourcing energy directly from the grid. Without direct access to the grid, events become reliant upon portable generators. When powered by fossil fuels, these generators emit harmful greenhouse gas emissions, unpleasant odors, and produce unwanted noise. The use of renewable options can enhance the fan experience by eliminating fumes and sound.

Goal: Optimize energy use to save money, reduce fuel consumption, and use renewable sources.

Key Performance Indicators:

1. Number and size of generators used
2. Amount of energy used; you will have to work with an energy supplier to gather info
3. Percentage of renewable power used

Strategies

Reduce

1. Reduce the energy load and optimize generator use.
 - a. Make accurate assessments of how much power is needed. Over-estimations of power requirements create unnecessary costs and fuel use.
 - b. Work with suppliers and partners, such as lighting companies, to reduce the amount of power the event requires. Examples include the use of LED lighting, which significantly reduces power demand.
 - c. Plan race to take place during the day when there is less of a need for lighting.

Use Renewable Sources

2. When available, strategically plan race location and critical operations (start/finish, vendors, expo) where "plug-and-play" to the energy grid is accessible.
 - a. When sourcing energy from main feed connected to the grid, inquire local utility or energy provider about purchasing sustainably generated power.
3. Consider solar or hybrid options.
 - a. Source solar light towers and solar generators.
 - b. Source hybrid power generators.
4. Other non-traditional options to consider over fossil fuel-burning generators.
 - a. Biofuel/biodiesel.
 - b. Efficient waste vegetable oil generators.
 - c. Low carbon hydrogen fuel cell generators & light towers.
 - d. People Power – Case Study [Bike Powered Energy](#).

Quick Links

- [The Powerful Thinking Guide: Smart Energy for Festivals and Events](#)

Transportation

Travel accounts for the largest source of carbon emissions in most events; with attendee travel usually accounting for over 70%⁷. Staff travel and the transport of supplies are also significant emissions contributors. Fortunately, there are several methods that events can adopt to incentivize how attendees choose to travel.

Goal: Reduce the transportation footprint of attendees, staff, and supplies through leveraging diverse transportation options.

Key Performance Indicators:

1. Number of attendees arriving by foot or bike
2. Number of attendees arriving by public transport
3. Single occupant car vs. carpooling or rideshare
4. Electric vehicles utilized
5. Reduced production, infrastructure, and procurement transport
6. Reduce distance traveled; you will need to collect attendee travel information

Strategies

1. Communicate transportation options before the event.
 - a. Provide attendees with a detailed map, including staging area, start, and finish line.
 - b. Include travel options and details, such as public transportation availability, access to a bike rack, and rideshare drop/pick up zone.
 - c. Plan to include a bag drop, eliminating the need for attendees to store gear in a car.
 - d. Create a carpooling link on the event website or social media pages.
2. Account for out of town attendees.
 - a. Partner with local hotels close to the event to minimize distance traveled.
 - b. Provide transportation options for attendees arriving at the airport.
 - c. Provide dedicated buses when demand is high enough.
3. Incentivize sustainable modes of transportation.
 - a. Partner with host cities to provide free or discounted public transportation for attendees. Contact local government officials or local public transport officials to inquire about transportation options.
 - b. Partner with rideshare or electric scooter companies to provide discounted rates.

⁷ <http://www.powerful-thinking.org.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/TheShowMustGoOnReport18..3.16.pdf>

- c. Consider discounted entrance fees, gear, or food for those who walk, bike, or carpool.
- d. Upcharge parking rate for those who elect not to carpool.
4. Staff and supplies.
 - a. Provide staff with an awareness of sustainable modes of transportation available at an event setting.
 - b. Create incentives or friendly competitions to encourage staff to use sustainable modes of transportation.
 - c. Work with local suppliers to reduce the number of deliveries when possible.
 - d. Work with local suppliers to reduce the mileage of deliveries when possible.
5. Follow up with attendees.
 - a. Postcode data from attendee signup to determine total mileage traveled by your audience.
 - b. Conduct a transportation survey to indicate how attendees traveled (or include transportation questions on post-race survey).

Quick links

- [Lyft Event Discount/Uber Event Code](#)

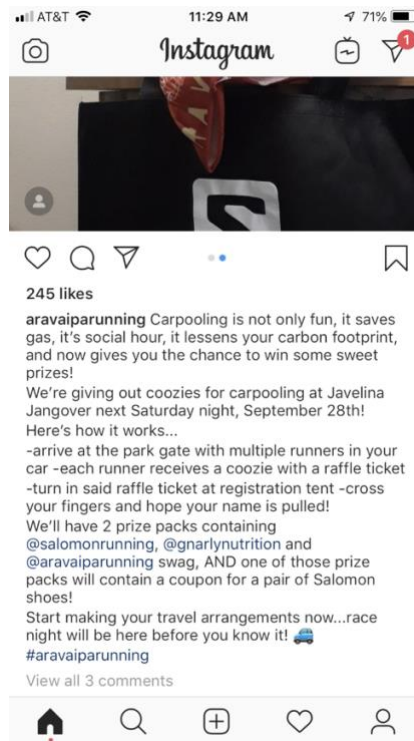


Figure 1 Example of Aravaipa Running incentivizing carpooling via social media
 (Source: <https://www.instagram.com/aravaiparunning/>)

OFFSETS

After taking appropriate measures to reduce energy load, prioritize renewable energy, and reduce travel-related carbon footprint, offsetting an event's carbon emissions is the final step.

Multiple companies exist, such as [Terrapass](#) and [South Pole](#), that assist in calculating how much carbon an event will emit and then providing an offsetting service. The price for offsets differs based on partnering organization and scope of offsets. Organizations can cover the expense of carbon offsets through several ways such as voluntary fees from event participants, building into sign up fees, or building cost into event budget.

The type of offset purchased makes a difference. For instance, offsetting, through reforestation, provides a more significant positive environmental impact than purchasing renewable energy credits.

Strategically choosing a carbon offset partner and purpose is essential from a brand perspective as well. USA Triathlon and race directors should prioritize offsets that align with the organization's values. If that is not readily identifiable, USA Triathlon can determine a cause to champion in which offsets can directly impact. Adopting a strategic approach will strengthen the credibility of an offsetting program, allow for a story to be told around the offsetting initiative, and ensure that customers have trust in USAT's sustainability efforts.

Before calculating emissions and determining offsets, USAT needs to identify all event emissions that USAT will own. For a robust and impactful approach, it is recommended that USAT account for scope 1, scope 2, and scope 3 emissions⁸

- Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from owned or controlled sources.
- Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy.
- Scope 3 emissions are all indirect emissions (not included in scope 2) that occur in the value chain of a company, including upstream and downstream emissions.

Example of some of the many operations to account for when calculating offsets:

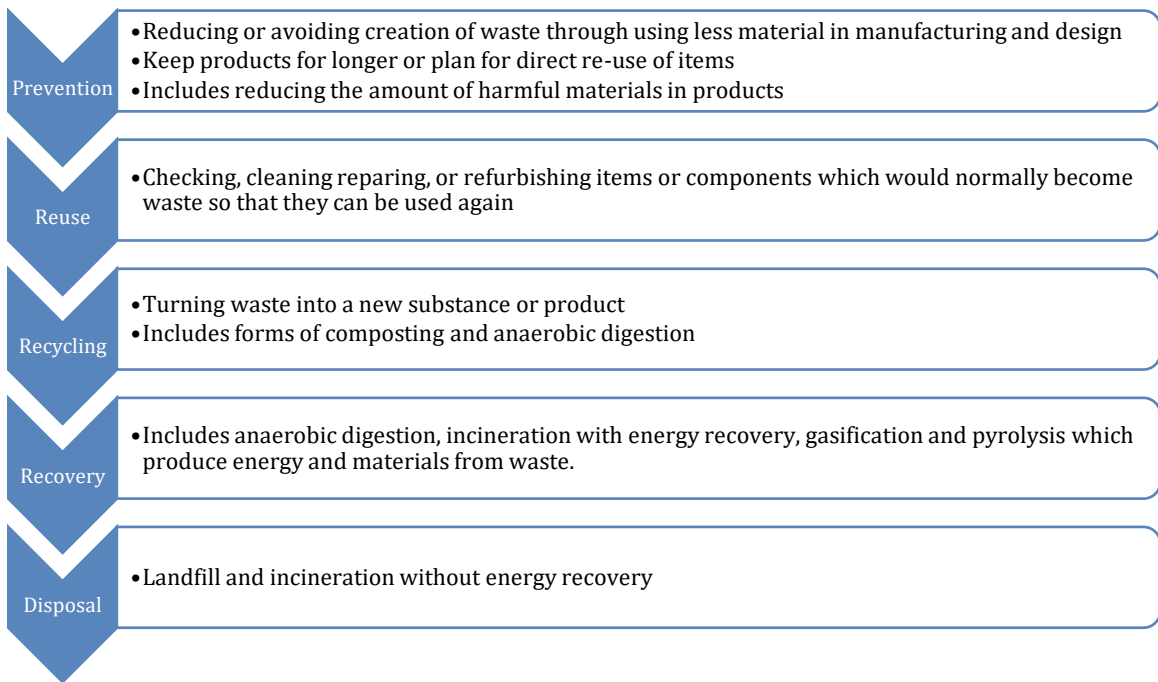
1. The average distance of participant travel.
2. The shipping distances of sourced and produced materials.
3. The number of generators used and the overall energy demand for lighting, timing, and vendor equipment.
4. Number of vendors and food trucks

⁸ <https://ghgprotocol.org/>

Waste

The way that waste is managed and the types of products that become waste have a significant impact on the event-related environmental effects. Also, waste is the most visible aspect of an event and can ultimately weigh heavily on the overall attendee experience. Race directors and event planners can proactively manage the waste stream of events through creating guidelines around what material will be sourced, sold, produced, or consumed by working with suppliers, vendors, athletes, and fans. Proper management will reduce both waste management costs and the amount of waste entering the landfill.

However, understanding the best methods for waste management can be daunting. Refer to the waste decision-making process below to better understand the hierarchy in accounting for waste and the best practices to adopt.



[EPA Waste Management Hierarchy](#)

Goal: Develop an efficient and innovative waste management system that promotes sustainable consumption, recycling, and waste reduction.

Key Performance Indicators:

1. Reduction in the total amount of waste produced.
2. Percentage of waste diverted from landfill.
3. Increased recycling rate.
4. Percentage of organic waste sent for composting or anaerobic digestions.
5. The ultimate goal – Zero Waste? Certified? [Landfill Waste Diversion Validation](#)

Strategies

Pre-Event

1. Communicate with waste management companies and host municipalities to understand what materials are recyclable, compostable, etc. in the event location.
2. Define and distribute acceptable material list (aim for all materials to be compostable or recyclable).
 - a. Provide to vendors and suppliers.
 - b. Communicate event waste goals to attendees.
3. Identify partnerships for hard to recycle items (e.g. food wrappers and energy packets), such as [Terracycle](#).

During Event

4. Strategically place waste bins throughout high waste generating areas (such as race expo area, near food vendors, in transition area, and at aid stations).
 - a. Clearly label waste bins with signage that includes pictures and words of what belongs in each bin. (Refer to figure 2 below).
 - b. Pair all bins together.
 - c. Have bins available for event employees, vendors, and volunteers (back of house).
 - d. Recruit bin guards to educate attendees and reduce waste stream contamination. Best practice (when possible) is to have attendees place waste on a table and trained bin guard places waste into correct bin in order to reduce contamination.

Post Event

5. Recruit volunteers or employees to do an event litter sweep.
6. Conduct waste sort after the event to further reduce waste stream contamination
7. Work with a waste hauler or local municipality to receive data analysis on the waste stream.
8. Resell or donate unused materials (including “throwaway clothes” athletes discard of on chilly race mornings) —partner with local charities and food banks.

Quick Links

- [ASU Zero Waste](#)
- [TRUE: Guide to True Zero Waste Certification](#)
- [Terracycle - Performance Nutrition Recycling Program](#)
- [Copia](#)



Figure 2 Examples of effective recycling signage
 (Source: <https://tours.asu.edu/sustainability/zero-waste>)

Water

The availability of clean drinking water is critical to the health and safety of athletes, spectators, and staff for a sporting event. Providing free, clean, and accessible water should be a priority. However, once access to water has been accounted for, there are strategies race directors and event organizers can take to conserve water, minimize unnecessary waste, and reduce emissions attributed to water consumption. Water represents an impact area that the sport of triathlon is inherently reliant on, thus creating an opportunity for partnerships, advocacy, and restoration efforts.

Goal: Responsibly manage and source water to meet the needs of event attendees while minimizing the environmental impacts related to water consumption.

Key Performance Indicators:

1. Reduction in single-use plastic water bottles
2. Locally sourced water⁹

Strategy

1. Source water directly from host locations' primary water supply (local tap water).
2. Provide signage/communications on the importance of water conservation for the sport of triathlon.
3. Eliminate single-use plastic water bottles.
 - a. Provide bulk water taps - [Water Monster](#).
 - b. Encourage attendees and staff to bring reusable water bottles. Or provide reusable water bottles to attendees.

⁹ This guidebook defines local as a 250-mile radius around the point of the event.

- c. Explore alternate methods for water consumption - [Seaweed Water Pouches](#).
 - d. Restrict the sale of plastic water bottles and require vendors to provide water in cans or boxes (double-check with waste management partner to ensure alternate materials can be recycled).
4. If possible, use water-efficient or waterless toilets.
 - a. Manage waste-water responsibly.
 - b. Reuse grey water when possible.
 - c. Utilize bulk hand sanitizer stations instead of hand washing stations.
 5. Offset water usage of event.
 - a. Partner with [Bonneville Environmental Foundation](#) through the BEF Water Restoration Program. Other water restoration and offset programs could be explored as well. (Marketing Opportunity)

Quick Links

- [The Making Waves Guide to Plastic-Free Festivals and Events](#)
- Case Study - [Bend Marathon Goes Cupless](#)

Procurement and Production

The production of each event requires numerous inputs, such as materials, equipment, contractors, and services. The impact of the event supply chain extends well beyond the event itself, from resource extraction to manufacturing; transportation; how materials are disposed of after their use; and how suppliers who provide products and services are managed. Included in this section are tips and consideration for responsible management of the event supply chain and production. USA Triathlon can champion local host economies through strategic means of procurement and production.

First, what is sustainable procurement?

Sustainable procurement offers an opportunity to create more value around an event by improving productivity, analyzing value and performance, facilitating communication between purchasers, suppliers, and stakeholders, and by promoting innovation. It is procurement that has the most positive environmental, social and economic impacts possible across the entire life cycle of good and services¹⁰

What to consider in sustainable procurement:

- Environmental Impacts
 - Inputs of natural resources, energy, and water in the manufacture, use, and disposal of a product.
- Social Impacts

¹⁰ <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/7b8df2bd-3bb9-49cc-b417-5f2eb6e0ce37/files/sustainable-procurement-guide.pdf>

- Labor conditions in the manufacture, use, and disposal of product or delivery of services.
- Economic Impacts
 - Costs of operation and maintenance over the life of the product.

Goal: Integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations into the procurement and production process to reduce adverse impacts.

Key Performance Indicators (analyze):

1. Supplier performance and implementation
2. Value of sourcing from sustainable suppliers – customer perception
3. Cost-effectiveness
4. Reduction in waste
5. Reduction in emissions
6. The benefit to local host communities

Strategy

Procurement

1. Develop an organization-wide procurement policy to promote alignment between sanctioned and owned events.
 - a. Incorporate the procurement policy into relevant supplier contracts.
 - b. Prioritize companies that manage and operate sustainably. Or if sustainability policies are an unknown request their sustainability policies to ensure they align with USA Triathlon's goals.
 - c. Prioritize certified suppliers (e.g., Eco-Label, Fair Trade Certified, or Rainforest Alliance).
2. Aim to reduce the length of the supply chain by sourcing locally when possible and communicate the event/organization's goal of reducing transportation-related carbon emissions.

Production

3. Hire local companies for service work to reduce transportation emissions.
4. Create specific requirements for vendors and sponsors that detail the event's approach to items such as:
 - a. Large- and small-format printing.
 - i. Prioritize electronic communications (e.g., paperless receipts, paperless menus, and digital coupons and samples in virtual goodie bags).
 - b. Food, food service items, and packaging.
 - c. Giveaways, mementos, race swag, and merchandise.
 - i. Prioritize virtual goodie bags (which could include future discounted race fees or coupons for massages or personal training sessions).
 - ii. Provide an “opt in” or “opt out” option for athletes at race registration.

- iii. Sustainably sourced gear or items that promote sustainable practices (e.g., reusable water bottles or canvas shopping bags)
 - d. Waste prevention and diversion goals.
 - i. Ensure vendor and sponsor requirements align with host communities' waste infrastructure.
- 5. Food
 - a. Require/promote vendors to carry:
 - i. Vegan/vegetarian options
 - ii. USDA Certified Organic ingredients
 - iii. Locally grown produce
 - iv. Seasonal produce
 - b. If serving meat provide:
 - i. Sustainably caught seafood
 - ii. Free-range chicken
 - iii. Grass-fed beef
 - c. Require all back of house food waste to be recycled or composted.
 - d. Require vendors to donate leftover food to local food banks or charities.
 - e. Communicate to attendees that they can bring their utensils and reusable food/drink containers.
- 6. Rent or reuse race infrastructure for future use when possible.
 - a. Reusable or recyclable race bibs.
- 7. Use recycled/repurposed material to construct infrastructure.

Advice: Work with suppliers, vendors, and sponsors in advance of setting requirements. This process can take time. It is critical to communicate why sustainable requirements are essential. If possible, develop an incentive program to encourage compliance.

Quick Links

- [World Bank Sustainable Procurement Guide](#)
- [City of Eugene Event Vendor Guidelines](#)
- [Waste Management Phoenix Open Requirements for Acceptable Materials](#)



Figure 3 Example of alternatives to typical race “swag”
(Refer to: <https://www.treesnottees.com/>)

Communications - Attendee Engagement

Attendee behavior is a critical component to the success of USAT’s event sustainability. The choices made by attendees have environmental and social implications. To this point, communications should be crafted in a fun and easily digestible manner that allows attendees to engage with events in a way that aligns with event sustainability goals.

USAT has the opportunity to craft attendee engagements that encourage not only sustainable behavior at the event, but also set educational goals to inspire attendees to participate in sustainable actions in their everyday lives. Attendees can leave an event with new motivation and knowledge for how they can contribute to sustainable practices that promote positive impacts at home. Although clever engagement requires effort, sport events are an ideal setting to inspire this positive change.

Race directors, event planners, and marketing experts can leverage the platform of sports, where athletes and fans happily convene. Furthermore, in an ever polarized world, sports remains a consistent for shared values. This nonpoliticized setting creates an ideal environment to teach sustainability. This guide focuses on cultivating sustainable practices in everyday life and how sustainability relates to the sport of triathlon. However, race directors or those in charge of communications can champion whatever topics are of interest to attendees.

Goal: Provide awareness of event efforts and programs so attendees can contribute while simultaneously empowering attendees with practices they can apply in everyday life.

Key Performance Indicators (analyze):

1. Set a baseline to determine the effectiveness of communication efforts(e.g. tracking page views, email open rates).
2. Effectiveness of communications in terms of compliance with event goals.
3. Attendee engagement pre- and post-event (e.g., social media mentions/hashtags, follow up surveys).
4. Effectiveness of communications/activations post-event that promote sustainable best practices in everyday life (use follow up survey).
5. Reach

Strategy

1. Methods of Communication
 - a. Broadcasting channels
 - b. Social media
 - c. Athletes as role models and sustainability ambassadors
 - d. Event webpages
 - e. Event emails
 - f. Showcasing sustainable action at event
 - g. USA Triathlon webpage and membership communications
2. Gamification - Research shows that behavioral rewards, scavenger hunts, and voting activities are constructive types of gamification methods.
 - a. Reward attendees who send in/post pictures with a hashtag of them contributing to event sustainability to be entered in a prize raffle to win sustainable gifts or experiences.
 - b. Offer raffle or discounted entry fees for those who carpooled or utilized alternate modes of transport.
 - c. Create a quiz or “did you know” games around recycling to test attendee knowledge and educate on recycling practices.
 - d. Post QR codes on event signage that provide awareness or best practices.
 - e. If utilizing technology for gamification, collect useful data on attendee behavior and the effectiveness of activities.
3. Design - Interactive and unique design elements at an event can serve as powerful tools to engage attendees about sustainability.
 - a. When planning an event, incorporate repurposed/recycled sustainably managed materials that can be reused at future events.
 - b. Add educational signage to all sustainability features (reusable cups, water refill stations, solar trailers, recycling/compost bins, etc.).
 - c. Feature material and art made from repurposed material (USAT specific could be repurposed bike gear, running shoes, helmets, etc.).

- d. Unique ideas for race bibs and signage
- 4. Capacity Building Workshops
 - a. Bike repair
 - b. Repurposing of gear
 - c. Terracycle
 - d. Cooking/Nutrition
- 5. Let sponsors/vendors tell their sustainability story at your event
 - a. Example – Terracycle or renewable energy partners.
- 6. Donation Drives
 - a. Repurpose gear through donations (e.g., cycling gear, running gear, water bottles, etc.).
 - b. Food drive (ideal when partnering with a local food bank)



Figure 4 Example of attendee engagement at gamification section at WM Phoenix Open
(Taken during Waste Management Zero Waste Tour in January 2020)

Access & Equity

This section focuses on the social pillar of sustainability. Often, the social aspect of sustainability is overlooked, in part due to a lack of understanding. This guidebook will work under the following definition, “socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic, and provide a good quality of life.”¹¹

USA Triathlon events provide ideal platforms to unite and appeal to a wide range of socioeconomic groups. Actively working to improve equality around events, primarily by increasing access among underrepresented groups, aligns with USAT's guiding principle of "operating in a spirit of service and accessibility..." By taking a strong position on access and equity in the sport of Triathlon, USAT can show a strong commitment to inspire more people to be active, connect with their environment, and promote the benefits of mental and physical well-being.

Goal: Commit to the inclusivity of events by identifying barriers to participation or representation.

Key Performance Indicators:

1. Enhanced numbers of participants
2. Diversity of USAT members
3. Number of disadvantaged youth impacted through scholarship or volunteer opportunities

Strategy

1. Make a public statement of commitment to inclusivity. Include both broad statements on the USAT webpage and event-specific statement.
 - a. Statements should include mention of acceptance regardless of race, cultural identity, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, and appearance
 - b. Track requests, complaints, and feedback related to statements for reference in future event planning
2. Create a publicly available process to accommodate requests
 - a. Allow for people with a range of mobility levels, sensory capacities, and/or disabilities the opportunity to make requests for accommodations that would allow participation as a participant or spectator. *Note that not all accommodations can be met, and that is OK as long as requests receive responses.
3. Provide accommodations
 - a. Ensure the venue has accessibility for people with disabilities
 - b. Waive race registration fees for guides who assist athletes
4. Identify under-represented groups and the barriers to participation or representation

¹¹ <https://www.esg.adec-innovations.com/about-us/faqs/what-is-social-sustainability/>

- a. Common barriers to be aware of: access to registration/fee, access to event location/transportation, access to necessary equipment, and nutrition both on-site and in general.
 - b. Communicate with representatives of underrepresented groups to understand what does and doesn't interest them about a particular event or the sport of triathlon in general. Make efforts to understand what would keep them from attending or participating and what would make the sport or event more feasible or attractive.
5. Be culturally aware
- a. Know the ethnic and cultural demographic of host communities.
 - i. Develop potential outreach plans to promote the representation of the host community.
 - b. Event information material available in multiple languages dependent upon host setting
6. Host a race director/volunteer training session on access and equity
7. Offer opportunities for youth, specifically disadvantaged youth
- a. Outreach to youth to be volunteers
 - b. Job shadowing or mentorship opportunities (e.g., create an internship role around event planning).
 - c. Clinics and educational workshops directed towards youth (e.g., goal-setting or healthy eating).
 - d. Create a scholarship for disadvantaged youth to be applied for either participation in the sport or educational opportunities.

Quick Links

- Case Study - [Students Run LA](#)
- Article - [Equality, equity and the role of fairness in inclusive sport](#)
- An article addressing diversity in trail running - [Joe Gray Wants to Tackle Distance Running's Diversity Problem](#)

Marketing

USA Triathlon could be operating the most sustainable events in the world, but if the success stories and positive impacts are not shared, then the USAT brand is missing out on valuable benefits. Being regarded as a reputable green brand can open pathways for sponsorship, maintain positive relations with host communities to ensure sustained annual events, and improve USAT athlete and fan perception. Furthermore, sustainability can be used as a value-added tool for attracting new members to USAT, especially members of the Millennial and Gen Z generations who expect organizations to take responsible measures geared toward social and environmental challenges.

USAT must highlight the positive initiatives taken within events. Marketing sustainable topics, such as responsible waste management or renewable energy, requires creativity to ensure that messages are conveyed correctly and engagingly. A good marketing strategy is to translate efforts into tangible examples that are easily relatable to the audience. For

example, a story can center around how the offsetting of event CO2 emissions was the equivalent to "X" amount of cars taken off the road. This strategy is more relatable to an audience rather than saying the event offset "X" tonnes of CO2. Additionally, incorporate a narrative around the direct connection between event sustainability and the sport of triathlon (e.g., clean air, no plastic waste in waterways, etc.).

All USAT outlets should be leveraged in marketing, including social media platforms, USAT webpage, event webpages, press releases, media reports, and member newsletters. Below is a list of potential marketing options.

Marketing Topic Outline:

1. Sustainability Mission – Organization-Wide or Event Specific
2. Zero Waste/Waste Reduction Goals
3. Carbon Reduction Goals/Offsetting Projects
 - a. USAT could align objectives with [UN Sustainable Development Goal\(s\)](#)
4. Sustainable Transportation Options
5. Exemplify how and why USAT is championing local host communities
 - a. USAT could highlight local vendors or volunteers
6. Athlete highlights or Q&As regarding sustainability
7. Water reduction efforts
8. How event attendees can be more sustainable - event-specific or general best practices
 - a. Transportation
 - b. Reusable water bottles
 - c. Waste management practices
 - d. Food options
 - e. Local business partners that attendees can support

Advice: Avoid greenwashing¹² or overstating accomplishments. Be transparent, as there is no shame in announcing small achievements. Furthermore, do not be tentative in admitting that a goal has not been reached. The audience will find a reason to celebrate and support well-intended efforts to achieve goals in the future.

¹² <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/greenwashing.asp>



Figure 5 Ironman promoting local restaurant during race week

Reporting

An annual report is where USAT can document the overall performance of events based on progress toward sustainability goals. The annual report is useful as a reminder of USAT's mission and commitment to sustainability.

The benefits of reporting are two-fold. From an internal perspective, an annual report allows USAT to track the progress of sustainability efforts and reflect on what is working and what needs further attention. Ultimately, an annual report sets a baseline for improvement over the following year.

Externally, publishing an annual report is a measure of transparency and accountability in the public eye, further reinforcing the values and commitment of USAT towards sustainability. Overall, this aspect further strengthens the USAT reputation and brand from a customer perspective and can influence other sports organizations to pursue sustainable action.

An annual report can include, but is not limited to the following items:

- Waste diversion
- Energy usage
- Carbon reductions/offsetting
- Sustainable transportation breakdown
- Number of participants
- Volunteers
- Charitable donations/scholarships
- Impact on local host economies
- Sustainability sponsors and partnerships

- Sustainable giveaways
- Closed loop initiatives (e.g. Terracycle partnership)

*It is important to note that single events can follow the same guidelines in “event” reporting.

Quick Links

- Case Study – Flying Pig Marathon
 - [Greening of The Pig](#)
 - [Cincinnati Flying Pig 2018 Sustainability Report](#)

Data Collection

Data collection will be a necessary aspect in compiling an annual report, tracking metrics, and reflecting on performance toward sustainability goals. There are various ways USAT can go about collecting data. Methods include surveys, information collected through event registration or bib pick-up, supplier/vendor questionnaires, on-site interviews, and through mobile apps/social media.

Metrics to considered, but not limited to include:

1. Percentage of waste diverted (can be calculated through on-site waste sorts, or by requesting waste haulers or municipalities provide information post-event).
2. Zip code of event registrants and mode of transport (to calculate attendee miles traveled).
3. Energy used, the amount generated through renewable and/or amount offset (calculated by the number of on-site generators, or with assistance from utility providers and offset partners).
4. Percentage of sustainable or reused production material, such as signage and bibs (supplier questionnaire, or race director feedback).
5. The number of local vendors represented at events (vendor survey).
6. USAT member/event participant perception of sustainability (survey).
7. Have members/participants learned anything about sustainability through USAT (survey).

Collaborations

Collaborations are necessary to achieve the sustainability goals outlined in this guidebook. Whether focusing on planning, operations, communications, marketing, or reporting, strategic collaborations are integral to success. In pursuit of positive outcomes, USAT should leverage current relationships and cultivate new ones where opportunity presents itself. The goal is to create mutually beneficial collaborations that align around shared values and initiatives.

- **Municipalities**

Event organizers should communicate with host city government officials to share sustainability goals and learn what resources and assistance are available through the

city to help meet goals. Some municipalities may be able to provide reduced waste disposal fees, free publicity, discounted public transportation, or free equipment rentals. Additionally, many cities have their own sustainability goals, climate action plans, or event certifications, which could all align with USAT sustainability objectives and offer partnership opportunities.

- **Offset company**

As discussed earlier, it is recommended that USAT partners with an offset organization to assist in establishing emission baselines and offsetting event-related scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions. Potential options include [South Pole](#), [Carbon Credit Capital](#), [CO2logic](#), [Bonneville Environmental Foundation](#), and/or [Climate Neutral](#). USAT can choose to partner with an organization that aligns with organizational values and purpose. Furthermore, these organizations can assist in crafting a story around the positive impact of USAT's offset program.

- **Terracycle**

Many sports organizations and municipalities have partnered with [Terracycle](#) to account for hard-to-recycle items such as performance nutrition packaging. A partnership with Terracycle would greatly assist in event zero waste efforts.

- **Strava**

Organizations have begun sponsoring purpose-driven "challenges" on [Strava](#). Refer to the example challenge sponsored by Protect Our Winters (POW). USAT could sponsor similar activities, such as a "plogging¹³" challenge.

¹³ <https://www.runnersworld.com/uk/training/motivation/a776063/plogging-the-new-running-craze-that-is-saving-the-planet/>

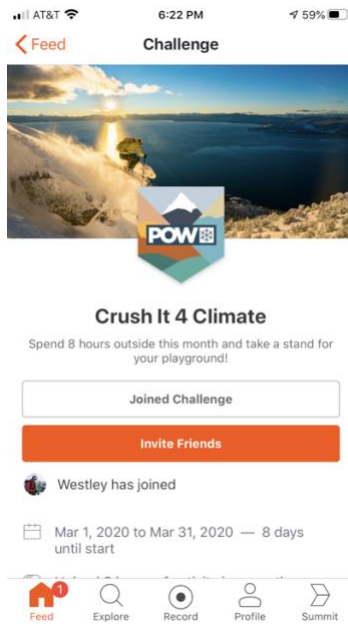


Figure 6 POW "Crush it 4 Climate Strava Challenge POW "(Source: <https://www.strava.com/challenges/crush-it-4-climate>)

- **Athletes**

Identify triathletes who are passionate about sustainability and leverage their platforms to get the message out on USAT's goals. USAT could brand sustainability ambassadors as "influencers" to motivate collective participation of sustainability at events and in everyday life. Ideally, both professional and amateur triathletes could be selected as ambassadors to promote a collective, inclusive message. Refer to the following interview from renown trail runners commenting on sustainability: [Damian Hall and Kilian Jornet: Big Athletes, Little Impact](#).

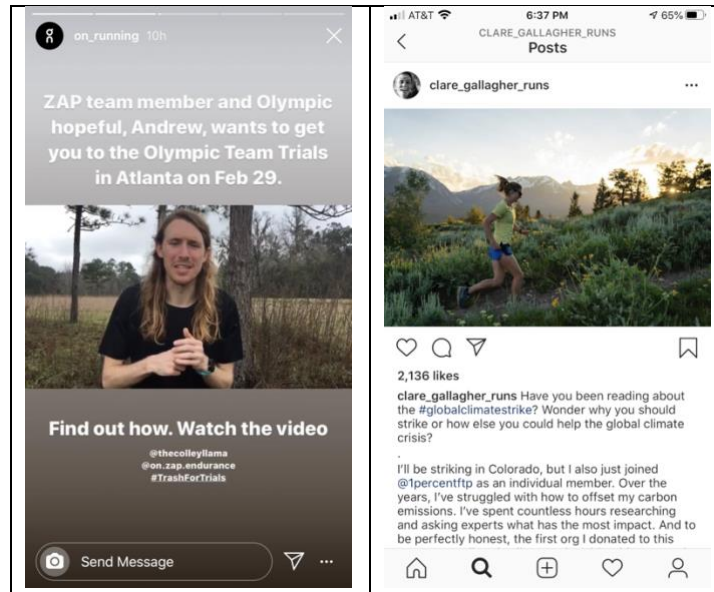


Figure 7 Athletes promoting sustainability initiatives through “Plogging challenge” and Climate Action (Source: https://www.instagram.com/on_running/ & https://www.instagram.com/clare_gallagher_runs/)

- **UN Sport for Climate Action**

Several sports organizations have signed on to commit to the [UN Sport for Climate Action Framework](#). In a show of commitment to sustainability and solidarity with fellow sport's organizations, USAT should commit as well. Adopting the practices outlined in this guidebook is the launch point to work toward the principles established in the UN Sport for Climate Action Framework. Signing onto the framework does not require any certain level of sustainability, only a willingness to commit to sustainability efforts.

- **Green Sports Alliance**

With the existing partnership in place, be sure to stay up to date on information and initiatives shared by the Green Sports Alliance (GSA) and its network of members. Also, other GSA members may offer partnerships around initiatives or products. GSA can assist in the sustainability communication piece with USAT members as well.

- **Council for Responsible Sport**

[The Council for Responsible Sport](#)(CRS) is a helpful organization for event-related resources and knowledge. Stay connected and current on CRS initiatives and resources, and when the pieces are in place, identify an event to [certify](#).

- **The Sports Ecology Group**

[The Sport Ecology Group](#)(SEG) serves as a valuable resource producing and providing the latest research and trends in sports and sustainability. Frequent the organizations website to access a suite of resources including reading lists, podcasts, and teaching materials.

- **Leverage sponsorships**

Identify synergies in sustainability-related efforts with current partners and sponsors. For example, in races that require a lead car, partner with Toyota to showcase an EV or hybrid model as the lead car.

- **USAT Foundation**

Partnering with the USAT Foundation on social aspects of the sustainability strategy seems like a logical fit. Energy could be focused on campaigns over a fixed duration of time or even a singular event. The Foundation could assist in efforts to gain volunteers, provide scholarships, or in other youth engagement initiatives.

- **International Triathlon Union**

ITU recently established a ITU Sustainability Commission at the beginning of 2020 to push for a more sustainable sport. USAT should monitor that effort and work to align goals wherever possible. Continue to monitor ITU sustainability efforts.

- [ITU Launches global push for a more sustainable sport to combat global warming](#)

- **Volunteer organizations – underserved populations, high schools**

A steady stream of volunteers will be essential to achieving event-related goals. [Keep America Beautiful](#) is a national organization with branches in most US cities. Establishing a relationship could yield constant availability of volunteers. An additional route, as discussed earlier, is to engage with local high schools. Volunteer opportunities could serve as a means to introduce prospective new athletes to the sport of triathlon.

- **Universities**

Collaborating with university students can be mutually beneficial. Many schools now have sustainability-related programs, and students are eager for a "real world" project or internship opportunities. By contacting sustainability programs, event organizers could procure necessary assistance in managing sustainability efforts.

Additional Resources

Event Guides

- [Responsible Events Framework Best Practices Guidebook](#)
- [A Practical Guide to Hosting Radically Responsible Events](#)
- [Sustainable Events with ISO 20121](#)
- [UN Sport for Climate Action Framework](#)
- [Bristol Green Event Guide: Outdoor Events & Festivals](#)
- [Yellowknife Sustainable Event Checklist](#)
- [Richmond Sustainable Event - 7 Step Quick Guide](#)
- [Richmond Sustainable Event Toolkit](#)

Case Studies of Races & Organizations Incorporating Sustainability

- [Catalina Island Marathon](#)
- [Paris Marathon](#)
- [Banff Marathon](#)
- [Aravaipa Running](#)
- [New York Road Runners](#)

Miscellaneous Resources

- [2019 NCAA Women's Final Four](#)
- [\(NRDC Report\) Game Changer: How the Sports Industry is Saving the Environment](#)
- [Playing For Our Planet: How Sports Win From Being Sustainable](#)
- [Hoka One One: Our Sustainability Journey](#)
- [Quantis - Going for gold: the business case for sustainability in sports](#)