Sustainability

Background

This resource was prepared by Green Music Australia for the City of Sydney as part of the Creative Impact webinar series, July 2025. It provides artists, creative workers and organisations with a summary guide to the topic – a starting point on the creative leadership journey.

Green Music Australia empowers musicians and industry to act and advocate for a just and liveable planet through compelling campaigns, impactful research and inspiring education and training.

Climate change threatens everyone and everything, not least the arts and cultural sector. We know that a planetary environmental crisis can't be solved with individual efforts – it requires coordinated, collective action. Every industry has a role to play, and cultural industries are no exception.

Going green can often feel overwhelming, but it's remarkable how much of a difference we can make with well thought-out actions and policies. **Remember, sustainability is a path, not a destination.** Instead of trying to be perfect, it's better to take achievable steps and bring your audience and stakeholders on the journey with you.

If we want to find our way back to a society that puts Earth at the centre, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, voices, ideas and ways need to be at the forefront. Only together can we take action to solve the problems of climate change. Read more on how to place First Nations First.

This green arts project checklist will help you address sustainability pillars in 4 clear and actionable steps.

1. **Measure:** Look at available historical data to decide which actions will have the most impact, set targets and track your improvement.
2. **Reduce:** Reduce or eliminate the source of your problem.
3. **Mitigate:** Where you can't reduce, use sustainable solutions to minimise impact.
4. **Amplify:** As a cultural leader, what you do and talk about matters – especially to your audience members, peers, stakeholders and staff. One of the most important things you can do is use your cultural influence to share your sustainability journey and encourage others to take action too.

Energy

Measure

– Check past energy bills for trends and areas of improvement.

– Check the City of Sydney's Climate action for business guide for tips.

– Carry out an energy audit of your premises.

Creative Impact

Reduce

- Reduce energy consumption through energy and equipment upgrades. This could include building and equipment insulation or replacing inefficient appliances and lighting. There are great energy tips in Green Music's Green Venue Guide.
- Update or create shift checklists for staff to improve energy efficiency (for example, shut down procedures, heating/cooling temperature guides).

Mitigate

- Switch to a green electricity provider.
- Consider installing solar panels on your premises.
- Purchase GreenPower (accredited renewable energy).

Amplify

- Share your actions with your audience and peers.

Waste

Measure

- Review your waste bills and/or past waste audits to identify areas of improvement.

Reduce

- Replace single use items with reusable ones like crockery and cutlery. Reusable cups only have to be used 7 times to be more sustainable than a single use cup, check out Green Music's research to learn more.
- Avoid single use packaging in products.
- Provide accessible, refillable water stations and reusable cups backstage and front of house.

Mitigate

- Install adequate bins for glass, plastic, paper, aluminium, and organic recycling throughout your premises.

Amplify

- Create marketing material to encourage your audience to BYO Bottle and reduce their plastic consumption.
- Share successful waste strategies with your peers.

Food and drinks

Measure

Review for areas of improvement in:

- Catering
- Food and drink packaging
- Sales for trends.

Creative Impact

Reduce

- Prioritise food that's local, ethically made, and/or vegetarian.
- Consider switching wine and beer to kegs, barrels and taps to reduce bottle waste.
- Reduce waste by planning meals in advance.
- Use a Green Artist Rider for backstage requirements.

Mitigate

- Reduce impact on landfill through food scraps recycling.
- Donate excess food to rescue groups like OzHarvest.

Amplify

- Encourage climate friendly food with your audience.

Transport

Measure

- Calculate your previous air and land travel.
- Calculate attendees' air and land travel.

Reduce

- Select venues, studios and offices close to public transport.
- Plan tour itineraries with the aim of minimising carbon intensive travel such as flying.
- Choose public transport, rideshare or cycling options where available.

Mitigate

- Select carbon neutral courier and freight options.
- Offset your transport. See Green Music Australia for advice.

Amplify

- Provide up-to-date information on public transport and cycling infrastructure to encourage audiences to travel sustainably.

Equipment, supplies and staging

Measure

- Review supplies required from past projects.

Reduce

- Prepare your set design with sustainability in mind. See Theatre Green Book for inspiration.
- Borrow or repurpose second hand materials, equipment and supplies before purchasing items brand new.
- Use ethical and green suppliers when buying new.

- Avoid including dates, years, and sponsor logo to signage so it can be reused for future projects.

Mitigate

- Get equipment and supplies repaired and regularly maintained before repurchasing.

Amplify

- Promote your green stage set up with your audience.
- Encourage collaborators to use green supplies.

Fashion and merchandise

Measure

- Review previous costumes/outfits requirements and suppliers.
- Calculate historical merchandise sales to avoid overproduction.

Reduce

- Reuse and borrow outfits and costumes where possible.
- Create merchandise using ethical suppliers and recycled or organic materials.
- Purchase sustainable fabric and materials for costumes.

Mitigate

- Repair and mend outfits and costumes before replacing them.

Amplify

- Promote sustainable products to your audience.

Advocacy, programming and finance

Measure

- Review any current or past environmental strategies (for example, climate action plans, sustainability plans).

Reduce

- Begin the process of creating an environmental strategy.
- Create and/or program works which are inspired by the environment or climate.
- Use ethical ticketing such as Humanitix.
- Switch your banking and superannuation to climate friendly options.

Mitigate

- Donate a percentage of sales to an environmental cause of your choice.

Amplify

- Create a sustainability page on your website.

- Use your platform to support climate justice campaigns and encourage your audience to take action.

Industry resources

- Adelaide Fringe Sustainability Action Plan
- Brisbane's Economic and Development Agency's Sustainable Events Guide
- BYO Bottle
- CitySwitch Sustainability Action Plan Sample
- Green Music Australia Industry Newsletter
- Creative Climate Newsletter
- Green Artist Rider Template by Green Music Australia
- Green Venue Guide
- Guide to Offsets by Green Music Australia
- Green Touring Toolkit by Arts on Tour
- National Association for Visual Arts (NAVA) Environmental Sustainability Toolkit
- Sound Country: A Green Artist Guide by Green Music Australia
- Synthesise: Music Industry Sustainability Newsletter
- Sustainable Theatres Australia

City of Sydney resources

- How to switch to renewable energy
- Sustainable event guidelines
- Reducing waste from events
- Climate action for business