web summit

2021 UFI Sustainable Development Award

Partnerships for Sustainability in and after Covid-19 times

Web Summit

Sustainability in 2020

Sustainability has been be a core focus for Web Summit since 2016, when the organisation first publicly supported the UN **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and committed to advancing their progress.

2020, referred to as the 'super year' for the environment, marked the beginning of what needs to be a decade of unparalleled sustainability and climate action.

However, 2020 dealt humanity a significant blow in Covid-19. Web Summit pivoted to the virtual world like so many other events, hosting more than 150,000 attendees at our online conferences in 2020 using software that we built in-house.

We did not use the pandemic as an excuse to put sustainability on hold until physical events returned. Instead, we took the opportunity to better understand our environmental impact and to rethink our position, our potential influence and our strategy. We doubled down on building a better future for all. This journey would not have been possible without the contribution and support of multiple strategic partners.

Executive summary

We are thrilled to be finalists in the 2021 UFI Sustainable Development Award.

For our application, we have chosen to focus on four case studies that reflect our sustainability efforts and achievements in 2020:

1. Environmental impact of online events
2. Community activity and support
3. Maximising influence in sustainability
4. Measure to Manage

We believe this application conveys the increasingly partnership-focused sustainability efforts that we have taken despite the pandemic, and our pivot to online conferences in 2020.

Sustainability is sewn into the DNA of our organisation. A key 2020 goal was not only to make it our greenest year to date, but to build a robust framework that allowed us to seamlessly improve our environmental impact in the short, medium and long terms.

Our sustainability ambitions – both internally and as an external influencer – cannot be realised without the unfettered support of our partners. As such, the highlighted case studies involve partners who, as experts in their fields, helped design fruitful initiatives that maximise our potential to drive positive change.

NOTE: Further information relating to our case studies is available upon request should the award judges require.

SDG Focus in 2020

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION
15 LIFE ON LAND	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Case study 1
Environmental impact of online events

Problem

The internet is responsible for almost 300 million tonnes of CO_2 per year.

As a result of Covid-19, the virtual landscape was the most viable contingency for much of the live events industry in 2020, bringing both new opportunities and new challenges.

Most conferences and event businesses had not yet considered emissions they generate from their online activity, therefore little was known about how to:

a. calculate online-related emissions
b. reduce them
c. offset unavoidable emissions with credible carbon credits.

We recognised that the priority must be to reduce emissions wherever possible. As such, 92.1% of the total data from Web Summit 2020 was transferred via carbon-neutral data centres.

Next, we needed to understand how to offset unavoidable emissions responsibly and effectively.

92.1%

Data transferred via carbon-neutral data centres

"The carbon footprint of our gadgets, the internet and the systems supporting them account for about 3.7% of global greenhouse emissions, and these emissions are predicted to double by 2025"

(BBC, 2020)

Case study 1
Environmental impact of online events

Partner: The Institute for Climate Leadership

The Institute for Climate Leadership provides knowledge, tools and resources for companies and organisations to help them effectively transition to a net-zero emissions economy while benefiting local communities.

Why partner?
We recognise the increasing importance of businesses giving back more than they take, and aspire to work with high-quality carbon projects that tick multiple environmental, social and economic boxes beyond simply offsetting.

In 2020, we made the decision to partner with a leading organisation that had a deep understanding of the carbon space and that could help us:

- **Understand, measure and offset unavoidable internet-related emissions**

- **Educate and advise our attendees on reducing their internet-related emissions**

- **Assess, select and purchase high-quality offsets that go beyond carbon sequestering to include other benefits, such as supporting biodiversity and local communities**

INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE LEADERSHIP
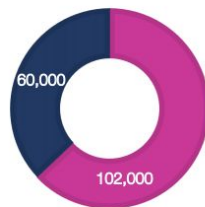
Case study 1
Environmental impact of online events

Web Summit Emissions
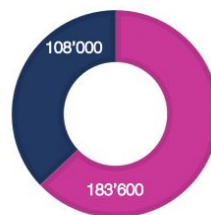
The Institute for Climate Leadership helped us better understand and calculate Web Summit 2020 energy consumption and emissions
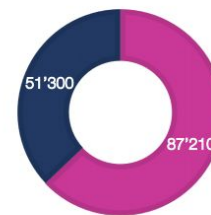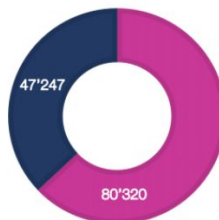
TOTAL DATA

60,000

102,000

TOTAL: **162.000,00** (GB)

ELECTRICITY USED

108'000

183'600

TOTAL: **291'600** (kWh)

CARBON EQUIVALENT EMISSIONS

51'300

87'210

TOTAL: **138,510** (kg CO2e)

DISCOUNTED GHG EMISSIONS FROM CARBON NEUTRAL SERVERS (kg CO2e)

47'247

80'320

TOTAL: **127'568** (kg CO2e)

FINAL GHG EMISSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EVENT (kg CO2e)

4'053

6'890
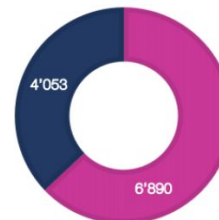
TOTAL: **10'942** (kg CO2e)

EVENT WEBSITE   **EVENT APP**
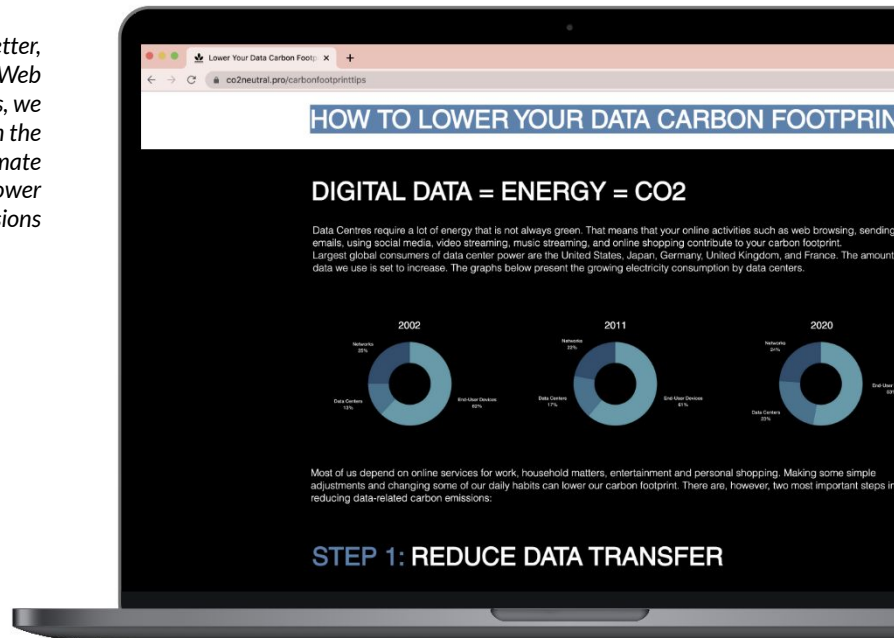
Environmental impact of online events

Education and influence

Our partnership with the Institute for Climate Leadership gave us the expertise and credibility needed to share best practices and free advice with our event attendees via:

- Pre-event newsletter article sharing information on how to measure and lower an individual's online carbon emissions

- Social media support across Web Summit channels, where all Web Summit followers could access the advice

- A free partner profile for the Institute for Climate Leadership at Web Summit, where all attendees could meet with representatives and experts for more information and advice on reducing carbon emissions and offsetting

Via our event newsletter, which is sent to all Web Summit attendees, we shared free advice from the Institute for Climate Leadership on how to lower individual online emissions

Environmental impact of online events

## Results: Chosen projects

High-quality offsets

10,924 kg CO$_2$e (Carbon dioxide equivalent) offsets were used for the neutralisation of Web Summit 2020 GHG (greenhouse gases) emissions. They came from two high-quality Amazon-based biodiversity conservation projects: The Manoa Farm REDD+ Project (pictured) and Maisa REDD+ Project.

More than just carbon offsetting

REDD+ is a framework created by the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) to guide forest-sector activities that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, as well as providing sustainable management of forests and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
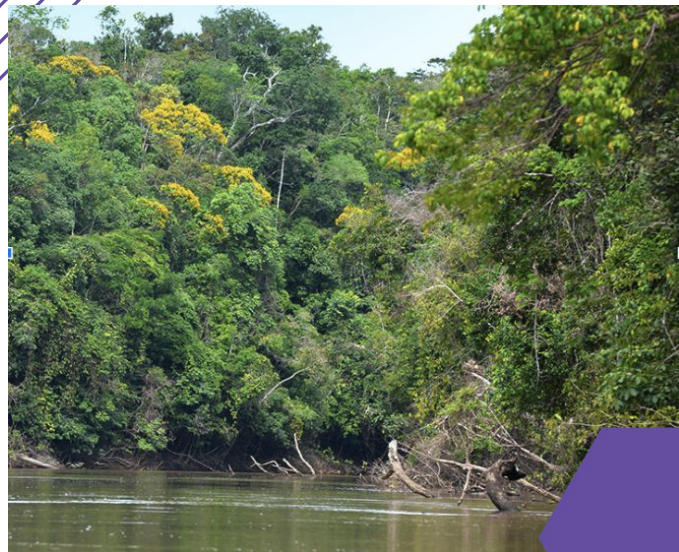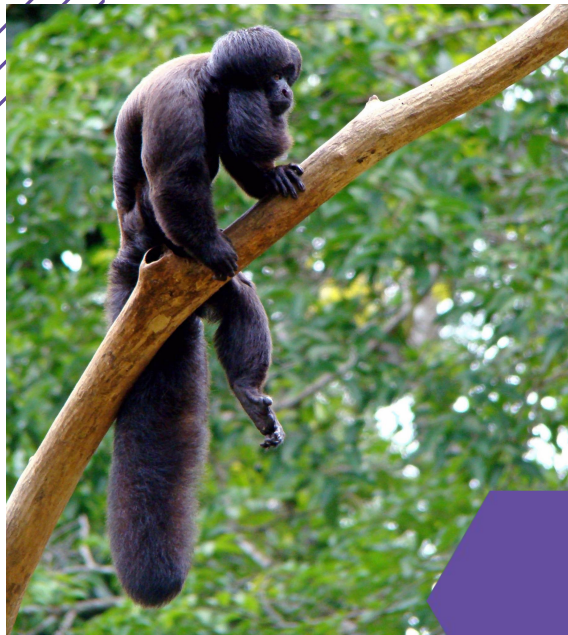

Manoa Farm REDD+ Project

Case study 1
Environmental impact of online events

Chiropotes satanas (Cuxiú-preto)

ABOUT THE MANOA FARM PROJECT

Manoa Farm is a guardian to the rich, endangered biodiversity of the Amazon region, and also serves as an ecological corridor among the local preservation areas, forming a forest block of 480,000 hectares. The project also supports small producers, local associations and young people of the region, and consistently employs sustainable management techniques to spread best practices of land use and forest conservation.

ABOUT THE MAISA PROJECT

The Maisa project aims to promote conservation and valorisation of the forest through its multiple uses. Historically, the Amazon region is marked by high rates of deforestation, a fact that reinforces the importance of the Maisa project's strategies. These involve the improvement of the area's monitoring processes, providing the protection of species in critical danger of extinction – such as Chiropotes satanas (Cuxiú-preto) [pictured left] – and promoting sustainable agricultural and extractive activities.

Community activity and support

Problem

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered a global public health crisis. With Covid-19 shining a light on deep-seated inequality in multiple forms, Web Summit has the opportunity to positively influence communities all over the world. We have the means – and therefore the responsibility – to support communities in need, locally and globally.

Solution

- **Partner** with tech-based community sharing platform ChangeX to identify the most effective community projects across Ireland
- **Fund** chosen projects to the sum of €1 million
- **Hire** and support a full time Community Lead

Partner: ChangeX

ChangeX is a platform that gets proven ideas and funding directly to anyone ready to lead impactful projects in their communities.

Why Partner?

ChangeX ensured that our donation was deployed in the most efficient way possible. The organisation's team of experts not only provided grants to the right charities, but also ensured ongoing reporting and communications with the beneficiaries. We work collaboratively with our partners in our aspiration to be more than just a funder, and feel that our ChangeX donation went further because of our partnership with them.

Case study 2
Community activity and support

1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Partner results

Our partnership with ChangeX in numbers:

€1m

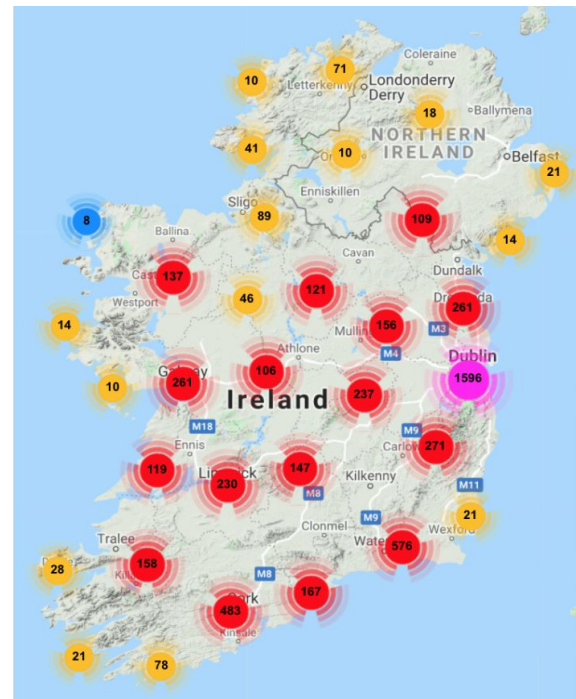funds allocated by
Web Summit

22

individual grants of between €10,000 and €150,000
delivered throughout Ireland and Portugal

6,024

local projects funded

182,000+

people impacted

Case study 2
Community activity and support

SDG Focus

Ireland

€150,000

Heroes Aid
Purchasing and distributing PPE
equipment to hospitals, nursing
homes and communities

€50,000

Good Grub
Distributing nutritious fruit and
veg parcels to the families of
DEIS (Delivering Equality of
Opportunity in Schools) students

€100,000

Food Cloud
Delivering food to charities
around Ireland

€100,000

GROW it Forward
Mobilising 50,000 people to
grow their own food

€50,000

MyMind
Expanding and improving tech to
meet increased demand for
mental health services

Case study 2
Community activity and support

Portugal

Partnerships mean more than just making a donation. With ChangeX having limited experience in Portugal, Web Summit harnessed its Portuguese teams and contacts to ensure donations reached the most worthy causes.

€25,000

Emergency Food Network
Providing food to the most disadvantaged communities across Portugal

€25,000

Zero Desperdicio
Reducing food waste and distributing food to families that need it

€25,000

AMPMV
Supporting older isolated people most impacted by the crisis in Lisbon

€15,000

Tech4Covid
Supporting a movement of 5,000+ engineers, designers, marketers and health professionals using tech to respond to the pandemic

€10,000

StudentKeep
Addressing education inequality by providing tech to kids that need it

Community activity and support

In 2020, we appointed a full-time Community Lead to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion across our events

Community partnerships

Community partnerships at each event consist of a series of collaborations with a variety of groups, ranging from networks and movements to nonprofits and fellowship programmes.

Why do we have community partnerships?

The main purpose of our community partnerships is to focus on equity of access, and positive bias. This is steered by a goal to amplify and prioritise underrepresented communities across the industry. This work is rolled out under two pillars:

1. Web Summit as a global event
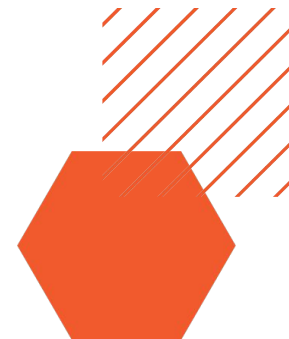2. Web Summit as a convener of leaders and entrepreneurs

Web Summit partners with organisations, companies and agencies that support and prioritise underrepresented people across our industry. In particular, our focus is to support the wider efforts being made to diversify venture capital and to improve representation in our investor and startup founder pool.

Education

In addition, we want to ensure that we are supportive of educational opportunities in terms of career development for graduates from underrepresented backgrounds. This includes working with various fellowship programmes, and offering free tickets and additional content where possible.

Other benefits

Community partnerships are free programmes. In addition to free tickets, we offer some marketing opportunities such as blog posts, email marketing and social media content.

Community activity and support

SDG Focus

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	

Operator Collective

Operator Collective brings together as limited partners 100+ of tech's most sought-after operators, investors, and founders from diverse backgrounds to invest in and accelerate the next generation of b2b tech.

The Knowledge Society

TKS is a global community of the world's most ambitious teens who want to make an impact using emerging technologies and sciences.

The Fireweed Fellowship

The Fireweed Fellowship is the first national accelerator programme for Indigenous entrepreneurship in Canada.

HBCUvc

HBCUvc's mission is to direct how capital is formed and distributed to increase opportunities for Black, Indigenous and Latinx innovators.

Case study 3
Maximising influence in sustainability

Problem

In the absence of physical events in 2020, there were fewer opportunities for critical meetings, conversations, engagements and thought leadership related to climate action.

Web Summit was in the fortunate position of having the audience, leaders and reach – as well as the software – to bring stakeholders together in a meaningful way, and to facilitate connections with a focus on impact.

104,328
attendees

168
countries

3,503
journalists

37.3m
social media impressions

Maximising influence in sustainability

SDG partner initiatives 2020

Women in tech

Web Summit is committed to empowering women across the globe by fostering networking opportunities, building mentorship programmes, and nurturing our online women in tech community.

In 2020, **nearly 46%** of Web Summit attendees were female. We want to continue to improve this number across all of our events.

Amplify

Amplify is Web Summit's commitment to amplify the voices of under-represented communities in tech. We also actively seek investors and funds that work to diversify venture capital and prioritise investing in diversity.

INSPIRE

We partner with the prime minister of Portugal and universities in Lisbon to offer students the chance to access our event content, and to connect with attendees, for free. Since 2016, more than 54,000 students have participated.

IMPACT

Our new dedicated Impact initiative celebrates the emerging startups at Web Summit and Collision working to make the 17 UN SDGs more achievable. We also partner with investors and mentors wishing to provide their valuable time and insight to startups during the event.

At Web Summit 2020:
- 200+ impact startups selected
- 50+ impact investors selected
- 60+ hours of expert mentorship enjoyed by impact startups
- **60+ Mentor Hours** between impact startups and impact experts

IMP**ACT**

WOM=N IN TECH

INSPIRE

AMPLIFY

Race to Zero and Amazon Climate Pledge

The Race to Zero campaign is led by UNFCCC and aims to rally leadership across businesses, cities, regions and investors for a healthy, resilient, zero-carbon recovery. Web Summit officially joined Race to Zero in 2020.

Climate innovation

Our collaboration with UNFCCC's Race to Zero campaign saw Web Summit curating a special group of 20 game changing carbon transition startups, bringing them together with corporate, political and climate leaders, and investors.

Thought leadership and promotion

Web Summit provided Race to Zero leaders stage time to address our community, followed by live Q&A sessions to allow attendees to ask real-time questions and by a live press conference with Nigel Topping.

We also used our platform to amplify Amazon's 'Climate Pledge' announcement, which related to net zero commitments from major transportation sector businesses, including **Uber, Cabify, WestJet** and **Ravi**.

Education

Web Summit gave the Race to Zero team space to host invite-only roundtables with leading innovators to discuss the carbon transition.

Kara Hurst
CSO
Amazon

Nigel Topping
High Level Climate Champion
COP26

Case study 3
United Nations Global Compact

In 2020, Web Summit officially joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). UNGC is the world's largest voluntary corporate sustainability initiative.

Thought leadership

In 2019, the United Nations brought the SDG Media Zone to Web Summit for the first time, running three full days of livestreamed SDG-specific content, including interviews with former British prime minister Tony Blair and the secretary-general of Amnesty International, Kumi Naidoo.

We continued the partnership in 2020, and welcomed the new UNGC executive director, Sanda Ojiambo, to centre stage to address our attendees in relation to the importance of the SDGs.

A short video from former UNGC CEO Lise Kingo on Web Summit

Sanda Ojiambo
Executive Director
UNGC

Education and advice

In 2019 and 2020, Web Summit provided UNGC with workshop space and partner space so that all attendees had free access to SDG advice from representatives throughout the conference.
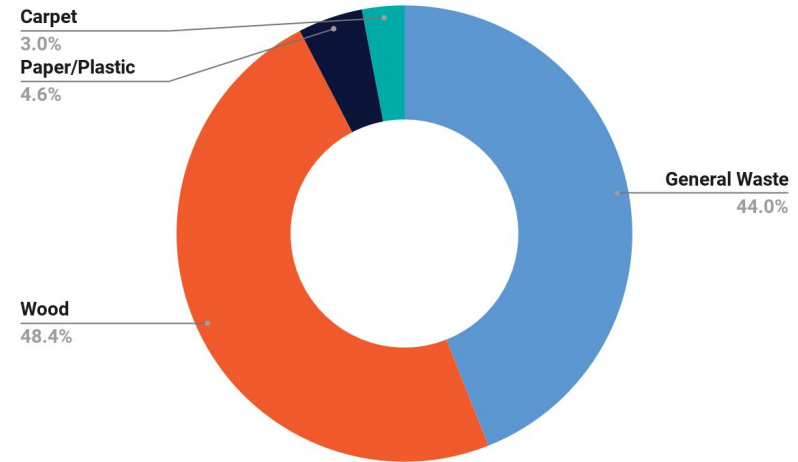
Case study 4
Measure to Manage

Problem

A 2020 audit concluded that, to enhance Web Summit's real-world impact, ESG practices should grow into more integrated, data-driven, monitored reporting processes.

Solution

To ensure Web Summit meets our ambitions for our **Road to 2030** sustainability strategy, and to understand the pressures the Lisbon event places on environmental resources, three actions were taken:

1. **Perform** GAP analysis on **Lisbon Web Summit** data and processes, capturing and centralising all existing sustainability data

2. **Establish** a user-friendly, efficient, integrated ESG tracking system that achieves best practice levels of performance, supports reporting, and monitors progress

3. **Publish** first annual ESG report in June 2021

Waste estimate @ Web Summit 2019

Carpet
3.0%

Paper/Plastic
4.6%

General Waste
44.0%

Wood
48.4%

Partners

Our suppliers – including Dariacordar, Triu, FIL, Altice Arena, Fonte Viva and Kofler Portugal – were partners in this **Measure to Manage** initiative

Case study 4
Measure to Manage – Perform

A GAP analysis was performed on Lisbon Web Summit 2019 data and processes to capturing existing sustainability processes and data. Here are the key findings.

What worked

Historic estimates existed for wood and metal product reuse in FIL and Altice Arena venues, as well as for catering waste and for recycling in partnership with our waste partner, Triu.

435k items of cutlery, sourced by Kofler Portugal for Web Summit 2019 catering services, were made of wood certified from Sustainable Forest Management sources

50% water consumed at Web Summit 2019 was mains-fed in partnership with Fonte Viva

6k recycled cartons of water were served in partnership with Fonte Viva in 2019, when Web Summit eliminated the sale of plastic water bottles

765 uneaten meals were donated to charity in partnership with Dariacordar's Zero Desperdício programme during the last three editions of Web Summit as we strive for zero-waste events

Room for improvement

50% wood was reused during the 2019 event and the remaining 50% recycled

3 tonnes of carpet waste at 2019 event

28% of performance indicators we needed to track that were actually tracked in 2019

0% {
recycled carpet used at Web Summit 2019

accreditation recycled at Web Summit 2019
}

No {
structured processes in place for gathering event sustainability data or monitoring its performance

structured process in place for identifying materiality of sustainability data and prioritising its reporting
}

Case study 4
Measure to Manage – Establish

In 2020, Web Summit developed an Environmental Management System (EMS) that uses a participatory approach to support transparent evaluation of environmental sustainability at our events. The EMS has three distinct pillars:

✔ **Tracking** using customised, quantitative **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** indicators

1. Identify materiality of sustainability indicators
2. Monitor performance against sustainability goals
3. Monitor indicator performance

✔ **Condensing** using a **METER** (measure events through environmental research) multi-criteria approach that combines 97 GRI-based quantitative performance indicators into nine key environmental aspects to assess the comprehensive environmental sustainability of an event

✔ **Prioritising** ESG report content, quality and boundaries using GRI sustainability reporting guideline principles as used by the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

9

environmental aspects

97

quantitative environmental indicators

28%

measured in 2019

Environmental aspects

Biodiversity

Catering

Compliance

Emissions, effluents and waste

Energy

Materials

Products and services

Transport

Water

Case study 4
Measure to Manage – Publish

In June 2021, Web Summit will publish its first annual sustainability report, in support of its *Road to 2030* sustainability strategy.

Key outcomes

Supporting ESG reporting practices with an integrated, data-driven, monitored reporting system is helping to achieve best-practice levels of efficiency and performance

GRI's Event Organisers Sector Supplement (EOSS) framework has provided actionable, customisable sustainability performance guidance

A customised METER index systematically combines 97 performance indicators into a final nine-aspect index of environmental event sustainability

Web Summit's ESG report content, quality and boundaries can be clearly defined based on GRI sustainability reporting guideline principles

A participatory approach involving attendees, sponsors, community groups, relevant agencies and venues is to be favoured when dealing with the evaluation of environmental sustainability
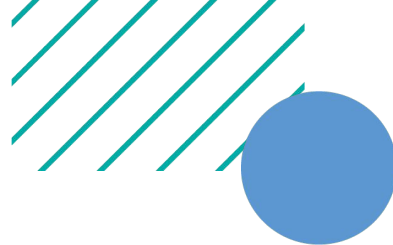
Key partnerships

What we learned

Make every employee a sustainability champion

Employees are as passionate about the sustainability goals as we are

Sustainability strengthens great partnerships and exposes weak ones

Partners that go the extra mile to deliver sustainable initiatives are the partners that help deliver world-class events

Results don't happen overnight

The journey to establishing markers of progress takes time

Spell out the economics

Setting out short, medium and long-term economic benefits can encourage just as much engagement as visible environmental and social benefits

Engaged teams are critical

The work that goes into sustainability initiatives is complex and needs an ongoing commitment by teams

Harness your partners' expertise

Whether it is carbon footprint reduction experts or specialist suppliers, partners have valuable expertise to share

"*Web Summit is hugely important. When so many people come together, not only tech is discussed, but the way that tech can contribute to creating a better world* "

Lise Kingo
CEO (2015-2020),
United Nations Global Compact

"*Our global network of entrepreneurs and leaders presents us with an enormous opportunity to provide trusted guidance, inspiration and thought leadership in order to help us stand together in trying to solve the world's biggest social, economic and environmental issues* "

Peter Gilmer
Chief Impact Officer
Web Summit

Road to 2030 – what's next

New
New Climate Advisory Board comprised of leading experts from our network to help us shape our sustainability activity

Publish
Publish first annual ESG report in June 2021

100%
Roll out carbon neutral philosophy to reduce and offset emissions related to all 2021 events

Educate
Help our attendees assess and select high-impact offsetting projects benefiting biodiversity and local communities

RISE   web summit   COLLISION