

CONFERENCE IMPACT AOTEAROA

How to ensure your conference
leaves a positive legacy



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Leaving a legacy

Conferences and business events have the potential to deliver positive social legacies to Aotearoa New Zealand beyond the benefits to the visitor economy.

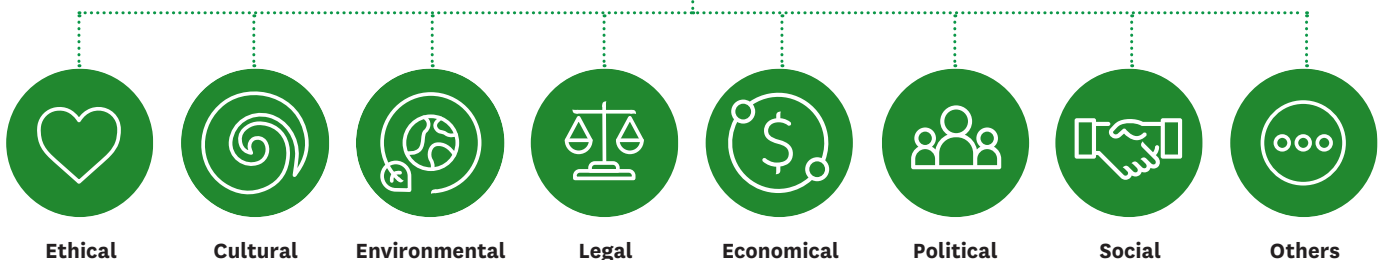
Making and measuring impact goals ensures we harness the power of these events and help to improve the social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing of the conference host community.

The information shared and decisions taken at conferences can profoundly change communities, impacting areas from public policy change to public health initiatives, environmental action, securing funding, raising public awareness, or the creation of new jobs.

Setting and measuring impact goals ensures conferences work as a catalyst for positive social change.



Types of impact





Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre, Christchurch

Why?

With sustainability and cost factors rising in prominence for many academic institutes and organisations, international travel must be more meaningful than ever. Setting clear impact goals for your conference will give delegates confidence to attend, knowing that your conference intends to make purposeful, positive change.

SETTING IMPACT GOALS ALLOWS YOU TO:

- Enhance the strategic focus of your conference
- Validate and demonstrate your organisation's mission, impact, and relevance
- Address specific local needs or gaps
- Build valuable long term stakeholder engagement/partnerships
- Align with national and international goals, e.g. UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Make a real, positive, difference - locally and globally

ASK YOURSELF

- What do you want to achieve beyond hosting a successful conference?
- Which of your association's goals are best tackled when the event is held in New Zealand?
- How can your event fill a gap or need in the community around your subject matter?
- How does this align with local priorities for social and economic development?
- How can you extract maximum value from the conference for all involved?



8th International Working Group (IWG) World Conference on Women & Sport, Auckland
Women in Sport Aotearoa

When? *The sooner the better!*

Defining impact goals can be undertaken:

- **prior to bidding for an event or congress**
(a strategic bid to meet a specific need)
- **during the RFP stage**
(suggest an impact goal that aligns with the association's mission)
- **or even after the bid has been won**
(to reap maximum benefit from hosting this event)

Ideally, the earlier you start, the better for maximum strategic impact.

How? *Start with the big picture*

Identify the need

what needs to change?



Identify the impact goal

how can you change this?



Identify the role of the conference in taking steps towards this change



28th Asian Seed Congress, Christchurch

What? *Set measurable objectives*

It is easiest if you map this out - our IMPACT FRAMEWORK may help

Identify need/issue	Impact goal	Medium term objective	Short term objective	Identify stakeholders	Identify conference activity	Measure change
Set a strategic goal for the host community.	What is the long-term measurable change you want to achieve?	What mid-term steps could you measure that would lead to this change?	What short-term steps could you take to affect this change?	Who will benefit from these changes? Who can help affect these changes?	What initiatives/activities are needed in/around the conference programme to progress these goals? Who will lead/implement these? When?	Set baselines and timelines to measure change. What data do you want to capture for each action (who/when/how?)

Start with your long-term goal and work backwards.

Put in place some short and mid-term goals that will act as stepping stones to your end goal.

Can you initiate activity at/around your conference

- that will change people’s knowledge, awareness, or skills?
- that will lead to a change in behaviour?
- that will help meet your goal?

For example, this could look like:

Identify need/issue	Impact goal	Medium term objective	Short term objective	Identify stakeholders	Identify conference activity	Measure change
To improve the number of Indigenous members of the workforce in your field to redress inequities of representation.	Increase number of Māori university graduates in the field by 5% over 5 years.	Increase the number of Māori studying in the field at tertiary level.	Increase understanding of the opportunities to study in this field at tertiary level.	Local high school, local universities, local iwi, industry group.	Provide an open session at the conference for final year high school students in the host city led by Māori keynote speaker. Run a special session for Māori undergraduates in this field. Prepare a national communications campaign for schools across the country. Investigate opportunity of grants for Māori students from conference sponsors/supporters.	Set benchmark level of Māori graduates pre-conference and number of Māori students, and measure change each year for five years.



28th Asian Seed Congress, Christchurch

Who? *Identify and engage your stakeholders*

Collaboration is key. What do you want to achieve and who is best placed to help make that happen?

Your stakeholders could include business communities, local associations, non-for-profit groups, government agencies, local authorities, universities or education providers, members of the community, sponsors.

Be goal-oriented; you do not want to engage too many stakeholders too early.

You will need to communicate to your stakeholders the value of adding impact goals to your event and identify jointly desired outcomes to get them on board.

Once the goals are set, ascertain what roles your stakeholders are best suited to playing in the delivery of these goals.

You will need to confirm the resources (time, investment, organisation, hours) available from those involved and plan a timeline of activity and assigned roles.

Continuity of leadership by someone in the local organising committee to help steer the direction is integral to the success of impact programmes.

Achieving this need not be time consuming. Once the impact project has been planned out, other international examples suggest assigning around 5-10 hours per month to ensure the project stays on track – e.g. 12 days over an 18-month period.



Where? *Map out the opportunities*

Where can you make the most change? Is it necessarily within the conference programme or around it?

What activities would be needed to generate maximum benefits for your stakeholders and meet the impact objectives?

Who will be responsible for developing, implementing, and monitoring these activities?
How can I mobilise my stakeholders?

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Do we need to add an additional content stream/social activity/workshop to achieve this goal?
- Can your local council fund a public workshop alongside the conference to extend outreach into the community via libraries or cafes? Can the LOC arrange for a keynote speaker from the main event to attend?
- Can one day of the exhibition be open to the public? Or local high school students wishing to specialise in the field?
- Can event attendees do a post-event field trip supported by local industry?
- Can local university early career researchers be paired up with more senior visitors in a 'buddy' system to support their conference experience and increase connections?
- Can mana whenua from local iwi be incorporated to enhance the Indigenous and Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) viewpoint?
- Can you involve local students in the event activities or develop outreach activities – a poster competition or hackathon judged by the experts attending the conference?
- Could you organise a Corporate Social Responsibility programme with a local organisation working in the same field e.g. an environmental clean-up activity?
- Could you lead a public awareness campaign through associated live events and media channels?



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Measure the changes

To be able to show you have made an impact, you will need to set specific measures that represent change or progress.

Ideally you want to aim for both:

Quantitative Data

Numerical/statistical/rankings to prove HOW much change has happened over time

This could look like:

- the number of activities in a specific knowledge stream increasing from conference to conference
- the number of attendees increasing at a specific session compared to a previous conference baseline
- the number of signatories to an agreement made as part of a specific initiative at the event
- measuring the number of unique visitors to a conference document online
- an increase in the number of people who take up the activity set in your goal

And

Qualitative Data

Descriptive, narrative, open responses to explain WHY change occurred

This could look like:

- conducting a survey to measure perception on an issue pre-event, then a post-event survey to measure change
- Consider the opportunity of surveying across multiple time frames e.g. a survey immediately after the event and then another in a year's time.

Do you need to collect and review any statistics – e.g. number of jobs in sector, number of graduates in a field, number of trees planted as part of a sustainability initiative – to set a benchmark to see if you have affected change?



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Share your success

All your hard work in bringing this conference to life is delivering positive effects for your sector and beyond!

Communicate the results of your impact project with your stakeholders, your delegates, with your industry, with the media, and wider New Zealand.

Examine how it went, what worked best and what your data tells you. Put in place any next steps to 'close the loop' on measuring change, and make any recommendations based on what you have learned as to what should happen next to keep the momentum going.

Be sure to share your findings, wins and challenges with the next destination hosting your event – they might want to use your event as a baseline and build upon your work.

Communicate your legacy impact through a case study that demonstrates the benefits to the audience – your conference attendees, your sector, New Zealand in general.

Please feel free to share your impact journey with Tourism New Zealand Business Events and your host city's convention bureau so we can help you share your story.

What now?

Your host city's convention bureau is a great place to start and can assist with facilitating the connections to drive your impact projects. Some have additional resources available to help you on your impact journey.

Case Studies

See examples of other New Zealand conference legacy projects here:

- **8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport**
- **2035 Oceania Summit**



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