



**International  
Science Council**

The global voice for science

# **ISC Environmental Sustainability Principles**

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## ISC Environmental Sustainability Principles

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### 1. Introduction

The role of the International Science Council (ISC) is to be the global voice for science and to advance science as a global public good. The values that the Council upholds in its work, its governance and its partnerships include: excellence; inclusivity and diversity; transparency, integrity and respect; collaborativeness; and sustainability. The ISC aims to embed the principles of social and environmental responsibility in its policies, practices, partnerships, sponsorships and procurement.

Sustainability is a process, rather than a clearly defined and achievable goal. In making efforts to reduce environmental impact in a socially responsible way, the ISC advocates for responsible organizational policies and practices, and encourages organizations to adapt their own objectives and practices in a way that is commensurate with global ambitions to achieve rapid and just transformations to sustainability.

### 2. Managing our environmental impact

The main areas in which the ISC can manage its environmental and social impact are: travel, procurement, organization of meetings and events, and secretariat operations.

#### Travel

Carbon emissions from travel, particularly from long-haul flights, far outweigh the environmental impact of any other ISC activity on a quantitative basis.

The ISC will take various measures to minimize its carbon emissions from travel, chiefly:

- Careful consideration of the need for, and the anticipated positive and negative impact (scientific, professional and environmental) of any trip or meeting.
- Systematic consideration of alternatives to travel-intensive meetings, such as teleconferencing or nodal meetings.
- Prioritization of lower-carbon forms of transport where practicable (e.g. trains over planes, direct over indirect flights, economy class over business class).

In addition to reducing travel, the ISC aims to record and offset the emissions of all people travelling at the expense of the ISC (including invited meeting participants). The carbon emissions of travel and the associated off-setting costs will be calculated with the carbon emissions calculator of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The cost of off-setting carbon emissions may be invested in, for example, virtual meeting technology, certified carbon mitigation projects, or science-driven non-profit organizations.<sup>1</sup>

## **Sustainable procurement**

The ISC will procure services, equipment and goods only when necessary and only from suppliers respecting national and international labour standards and environmentally sustainable practices.

ISC suppliers must:

- Not engage in any form of fraud or corruption (bribery, fraud, money laundering, etc.);
- Respect the human rights of their employees and not engage in human right abuses;
- Provide adequate working conditions to their employees;
- Comply with national and international social and environmental legislation.

In searching for and selecting providers, the ISC will give priority to:

- Suppliers with verified social and environmental responsibility credentials, including those that limit packaging of their products.
- Locally sourced goods in order to avoid the environmental impact of shipping.

The ISC will not dispose of equipment and goods that can still be used, but rather will donate them to non-profit local organizations.

## **Meetings and events**

ISC meetings and events, whether organized in-house, in other locations or in partnership with other organizations, will include social and environmental responsibility as criteria for choosing locations, venues, catering and supplies. Social and environmental responsibility considerations and principles (see Annex A) should be agreed with sponsors and partner organizations before committing to co-organize an event.

## **Operations**

Reducing energy use and material waste in buildings and secretariat activities, including printing practices, is an important way to reduce an organization's impact on the environment. The policy should be: Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle.

The ISC will conduct an internal sustainability audit of its workplace operations on an annual basis (see Annex B).

The ISC will provide guidance to its staff on how to minimize negative environmental impact in the workplace.

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<sup>1</sup> The ISC is aware of the weaknesses of carbon-offsetting schemes and will seek to use only effective off-setting mechanisms.

### **3. Fostering a culture of sustainability**

Above all, the ISC aims to foster a culture of sustainability within and outside the organization.

Financial resources and staff capacity will be made available for support of sustainability efforts, including training for sustainability in the workplace. The organization will appoint a designated sustainability officer, responsible for monitoring implementation of the ISC sustainability principles and for being a point of reference for staff.

Information will be given to the staff, governing bodies and ISC members on the organization's sustainability efforts and progress.

The ISC sustainability principles will be brought to the attention of all incoming ISC staff and governing or advisory body members. The sustainability principles will be shared with ISC Members, and sharing of good practice among Members will be welcomed and facilitated.

The sustainability principles and internal guidelines will be reviewed and updated normally every three years, on the basis of feedback and learning, including with ISC Members.

Finally, the ISC will advocate for organizational sustainability by addressing the topic and making reference to the ISC sustainability principles in meetings and publications and on its website.

## Annex A: Social and environmental responsibility event checklist

This checklist is intended as an aide in the preparation of meetings.

Before deciding to organize an event that involves air travel:

- Assess the likely positive scientific or other impact of the event, in relation to the negative environmental or other impact, including by estimating the carbon emissions related to travel.
- Consider whether the meeting or individual participation could be organized successfully virtually, entirely or partly.

Location and suppliers:

- Select a meeting location that minimizes overall emissions (notably from air travel), taking into account concerns for geographic, disciplinary and stakeholder representation.
- Select a venue with a sustainability rating, if available, and with recycling facilities for wastepaper and other materials.
- Recommend hotels within walking distance of the venue and with sustainability ratings, if available.
- Choose local suppliers, preferably with sustainability ratings.
- Ensure that temperature and lighting controls of the venue are set to the minimum adequate levels.
- Minimize paper copies of documents, replacing them by access to online documentation and information.
- Use recycled paper, if printing is necessary, print on both sides and without colour. Print onsite rather than shipping.
- Avoid plastic name-badge pockets. Use generic, reusable lanyards and collect them after the meeting for re-use.
- Do not offer tote bags.
- Offer sustainably sourced pencils rather than pens and provide pencil sharpeners.

Catering and sustenance:

- Offer water fountains/jugs (with tap water, where safe), rather than bottled water, and reusable or recyclable glasses, and suggest that participants bring their own water bottles.
- Offer local, seasonal foods and beverages, at least 50% vegetarian/vegan food and no red meat. Favour organic and ethically sourced options, including fair-trade coffee and tea.
- Favour caterers that use reusable cutlery and crockery (including cups and glasses) and minimize packaging.
- Favour caterers and venues with responsible food waste practices (e.g. collection for redistribution, composting).

Before, during and after the meeting:

- Before and during the meeting, including on any meeting-related webpage, inform the participants about the sustainability measures that have been taken to reduce the environmental impact of the meeting and to respect international labour standards, as well as what participants can do to help minimize the impact of the event.

## **Annex B: Internal operations checklist**

This checklist is intended to provoke discussion and reflection on measures that could be taken to improve the sustainability performance of an organization. An internal committee should answer the questions collectively once a year and propose possible follow-up action.

### *Energy sources*

1. Do we source our energy (electricity and heating) from the most sustainable provider?

### *Energy usage*

2. Is the workplace properly insulated, draught-proofed and ventilated?
3. Are the thermostats in the right places and set to the right temperature (19°C for heating, 24°C for cooling)?
4. Are there automatic power-reducing features, e.g. motion sensor lights, timers, power downs?
5. Is equipment low energy?
  - a. Lighting
  - b. Computer monitors
  - c. ...?
6. Are staff trained to use equipment and software in an eco-friendly way?
  - a. Email
  - b. Virtual conferencing
  - c. Other use of computers (e.g. streaming music/videos)
  - d. Turning off equipment and lights when not in use
7. Do we know our annual energy use?
8. Do we off-set our internal energy use?

### *Other resources*

9. Do we minimize the use of resources other than energy?
  - a. Paper
    - i. Are default print settings set to B&W and double-sided?
    - ii. Are administrative tasks digitized where possible?
    - iii. Is there a sustainable publishing policy?
  - b. Disposable items (stationery)
  - c. Packaging
  - d. Water

### *Waste and recycling*

10. Are measures in place to reduce waste and increase people's consciousness of the need to reduce waste and where to find help to do it?
11. Are recycling facilities for wastepaper and other materials highly accessible and visible?
12. Are recycling guidelines up to date, clear and visible? Are staff trained in good recycling practices?
13. Is equipment recycled at the end of its life?

### *Procurement and services*

14. Do we have a sustainable procurement policy? (Do we buy equipment and goods only when necessary, from recycled materials when possible and sourced from suppliers with good labour and environmental standards?)
15. Do cleaning service providers apply good labour standards and provide environmentally friendly products?

16. Are cleaning service staff trained in responsible waste and recycling disposal?
17. Do we have a list of catering service providers with verified ecological credentials and do we use them?
18. Do our financial service providers handle our funds in a sustainable manner and themselves implement an organizational sustainability strategy?

*Travel to work*

19. Are staff encouraged to take public transport or bicycles to work, or to walk, when possible?
20. Do we have a teleworking policy that helps reduce travel to the office?

*Travel for work*

21. Do we monitor, attempt to reduce and off-set our (unavoidable) carbon emissions from travel?
22. Do we monitor the number and size (number of participants) of physical and virtual meetings we organize or co-organize?
23. Does our travel policy include up-to-date sustainability considerations?

*Consciousness*

24. Do we know the organization's carbon footprint?
25. Are the organization's staff, governing bodies and members aware of its sustainability policy?
26. Is there a set of internal guidelines and resources for staff, in an easily accessible place?
27. Is there a designated person staff can bring questions or suggestions to?

<https://council.science/publications/sustainability-principles/>

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The International Science Council (ISC) is a non-governmental organization with a unique global membership that brings together more than 245 international scientific Unions and Associations, national and regional scientific organizations including Academies and Research Councils, international Federations and Societies, and Young Academies and Associations.

The vision of the ISC is science as a global public good.

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