Impact valuation for the North American events industry

Client: Sustainable Events: Big Initiative Group (SEBIG)
Client size: 20+ organisations represented
Project partner: A Bird’s Eye View

To assist SEBIG in advancing environmental best practice across the trade show industry, Little Blue Research conducted a sector-wide environmental materiality assessment to understand the USA and Canadian trade show industry’s overall environmental impact.

Service: Impact & dependency
Capital: NATURAL
Assessment location: USA & Canada
Case study details

Client need

SEBIG, a collaboration of organisations from across the exhibitions industry value chain, required support to undertake a materiality assessment to address the environmental impacts associated with the Business to Business (B2B) trade show industry in the USA and Canada. The aim of the project was to understand the environmental impact of the industry in the context of the industry’s wider economic impact.

The research project was designed to provide a holistic approach using an iterative methodology to:

- understand and measure the industry’s collective environmental impact;
- quantify the most important environmental impacts overall and by event/show life-cycle stage;
- pinpoint gaps in data or capability essential to decision making and industry-wide action;
- develop a framework for strategic short and longer-term actions for collective engagement at scale; and
- generate messaging to unite and engage industry stakeholders.

The challenge

- Identifying stakeholders, undertaking a stakeholder mapping exercise, engaging with relevant groups across the value chain and performing 20 stakeholder interviews.
- Obtaining data across the value chain for the trade show sector.
- Identifying short and long term actions for the industry to address their environmental impacts.
- Developing models to quantify environmental impact for:
  - Visitor transport GHG emissions
  - Venue energy use GHG emissions
  - Logistics GHG emissions
  - Venue waste (including methods for food and plastic)
  - Depot waste
  - Booth construction materials
### Outputs and results

- Identification of material environmental issues across the life-cycle of B2B trade shows.
- Prioritised list of short and longer term actions for the industry to take forward.
- Stakeholder mapping.
- Identified data and knowledge gaps.
- Output from 20 stakeholder interviews and review of 30 event sector sustainability frameworks.
- Final impact methodology.

![Figure 2 Outputs from quantitative assessment of environmental impacts](image-url)
What happened next

SEBIG is planning to release a public report focusing on the findings of the study, and suggest next steps for the industry to take forward.

The findings of the study will also support other initiatives, such as the recently announced [Net Zero Events Initiative launched at COP26](#).

“Little Blue Research did what many consultants could not - work for 18 months to quantify something that has never been measured before, during a time of significant disruption. Their flexibility and rigour helped ensure that we had confidence in the findings.”

Ben Wielgus, Head of Sustainability, Informa (SEBIG Co-Founder)