

The **SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST**

25 Things To Do when Launching and
Managing a Sustainability Program



Green
Business
Bureau



THE SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

This checklist serves as a guide on how to launch and manage a company-wide sustainability program. This lays out a roadmap on how to create the sustainability results and story you envision as a company and check off steps in the process along the way.

This guide is broken into multiple sections: Laying the Foundation, Launching the Program, Environmental Initiatives, Social Responsibility Initiatives, Embracing Accountability, Celebrating Success, Completing a Certification, and Creating a Marketing Plan. Each section includes details on how to achieve that step and create an intentional and successful sustainability program.

THE SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

25 Steps at a Glance

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- ☐ Write a green mission statement
- ☐ Create a Green Team
- ☐ Engage the right employees
- ☐ Create a sustainability plan

EMBRACING ACCOUNTABILITY

- ☐ Use a framework to track progress and milestones
- ☐ Publish an EcoScorecard
- ☐ Calculate your carbon and GHG emissions

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM

- ☐ Complete an EcoAssessment
 - ☐ Use a tool that produces an EcoScore
- ☐ Launch and communicate the goals and plan to all employees
 - ☐ Make a big deal with a company wide launch meeting

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

- ☐ Recognize people and program achievements
- ☐ Make sustainability part of your quarterly company updates

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

- ☐ Implement a Green Procurement Policy
- ☐ Recycle everywhere, properly
- ☐ Eliminate plastic
- ☐ Eliminate waste
- ☐ Switch to more efficient lighting
- ☐ Use green energy
- ☐ Reduce fossil fuel use in vehicles
 - ☐ Shift some employees to remote work
 - ☐ Use electric and hybrid vehicles
 - ☐ Encourage and facilitate carpooling
 - ☐ Provide public transit passes

COMPLETING A CERTIFICATION

- ☐ Verify your results by a third party

CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

- ☐ Demonstrate your commitment via marketing
 - ☐ Promote your commitments and accomplishments on your website
 - ☐ Elevate your brand and improve your reputation using social media
- ☐ Use a green business seal to promote your green business
 - ☐ Earn the benefits you deserve: quality employees, new customers

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES

- ☐ Focus on employee well-being
- ☐ Give back to charities & causes
- ☐ Support your local community
- ☐ Embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

1. Write a green mission statement

A green mission statement provides the organization and its stakeholders with an understanding of what's most important and what your company can do to protect the natural world and be more socially responsible. In most cases, your company already has an overarching mission statement. The green mission statement is a supplement – not a new corporate mission statement. Take your normal mission statement (assuming you have one) and consider how that mission can be delivered through the sustainable lens including your "why," goals, and success criteria.

Learn more in the GBB article, [How to Create the Perfect Green Mission Statement](#)

Examples:

"We are dedicated to environmental improvements that foster a sustainable future and lead to social and economical improvements in the community we do business."

*"Our mission is to do everything possible to expand human potential. We do that by creating groundbreaking sport innovations, by making our products more sustainably, by building a creative and diverse global team and by making a positive impact in communities where we live and work." **Nike***

2. Create a Green Team

Organizing a constructive and progressive team within your company can be one of the most empowering and valuable moves on your sustainability journey. Today, despite the early challenges, most companies that are serious about becoming greener have a productive green team or sustainability committee that is leading the charge and making a real difference.

This team of like-minded employees typically focus on two main areas of responsibility: operations and culture. The operations focus covers developing strategies to change policies and processes in order to lower environmental impact and potentially improve the efficiency of the business. The other focus, creating a green culture, covers employee participation and educating employees about the why's and the how's of sustainability, ultimately encouraging engagement and participation.

3. Engage the Right Employees

It may be difficult to determine the employees to include in the green team. The first instinct may be to include the most senior employees with the most decision-making power; however a successful green team requires enthusiasm. It is important to include those who are most excited about the program and will follow through with real action to ensure the most success. If the higher-ups in the company are not as excited about the program at the onset, seeing your sustainability program achieve real results may make them want to join the green team later on.

LAUNCHING THE PROGRAM

4. Create a Sustainability Plan

A sustainability plan is a comprehensive playbook on how you will pursue your program including several key components: sustainability drivers, goals and KPIs (key performance indicators), an action plan, and an implementation plan. The main sustainability drivers to consider when making your plan include: energy, water, food, waste, buildings, products & packaging, supply chain, transportation, community, employees, and all areas of business function.

Beginning with low effort, high impact initiatives will help you achieve some success early on and foster excitement about the program. These low effort initiatives will showcase to the members of the company that sustainability does not always mean extensive effort. These can be easy as switching to LED lightbulbs, changing to low flow fixtures, or using recycled toilet paper instead.

5. Complete an EcoAssessment

Use a Tool that Produces an EcoScore

In order to determine where you need to go, you must understand first where you are at. An EcoAssessment tool will give you an idea of where you already rank with your sustainability initiatives and what your baseline score is. From there, you can set measurable goals on the score or certification level you would like to achieve and map out what you must do to get there.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Does your business purchase paper towels and/or toilet paper made from at least 35-100% post-consumer recycled materials?	YES NO
Does your employee breakroom and/or lounge use silverware and reusable mugs and dishes? If you use plasticware, please select 'No'.	YES NO
Has your business completed a water use assessment in the last three (3) years?	YES NO
Do your faucets have flow rate controls (e.g., aerators)? If you are unsure, chances are you do NOT, please select 'No'.	YES NO
For drinking water, do you use filtered water (installed at a faucet or through a water cooler)? If you use any type of bottled water, please select 'No'.	YES NO
Does your business purchase trash bins and liners made from at least 35-100% post-consumer recycled materials?	YES NO
Do the faucets in your building have automatic motion sensors to shut off water?	YES NO

6. Launch and Communicate the Goals and Plans to All Employees

Make a big deal with an all Employees Meeting

To be successful, your sustainability program needs to be positioned as a high and critical priority for the company. Leaders need to be clear that your company is serious about becoming more sustainable and not doing this just to appease employees and address political pressures. A formal launch event is a great way to demonstrate this commitment and communicate the new updated purpose-driven goals of the company. Make sure the launch is a “big deal” with everyone involved, but especially with the green team and executive team.



ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

7. Implement a Green Procurement Policy

Green Procurement Policies (GPP) ensure that companies are acquiring materials, supplies, and services that are consistent with their established, company-wide environmental standards. GPPs can apply to both products bought to run the business internally (Ex. office supplies and equipment) as well as for producing the goods and services of the business itself (Ex. materials used in business products). Green purchases are those that have a low environmental impact and are more sustainable in terms of the materials they're made from and the sourcing and manufacturing practice considering the immediate and future impacts of purchases through their consumption and eventual end-of-life.

Learn more in the GBB article [What is a Green Procurement Policy?](#)

8. Recycle Everywhere

Recycling should be implemented at all stages of your company's processes from manufacturing, supply chain, at the office space, and at home. Before getting started, conduct a waste audit to see what is being disposed of and areas to improve. Though the instinct to recycle everything possible is natural, it is more important to assess your local recycling restrictions to prevent contamination and ensure everything actually ends up being recycled. Additionally, use separate stream bins and consider limiting recycling bins from being at everyone's desk to only a few in centralized spaces to urge employees to think more about what they are discarding and cut down on contamination.

9. Eliminate Plastic

Single-use plastics are detrimental to the environment and must be phased out as part of your company's sustainability plan. You can first determine the areas in your operations that produce the most plastic through a waste audit, then you can evaluate solutions to help reduce plastic. A solution to reducing single-use plastics in the workplace is by banning plastic water bottles on site, installing water bottle refill stations, and encouraging employees to reduce plastic usage in their own homes. One of the most common areas where companies use single-use plastics is packaging.

The Green Business Bureau is a thought leader on alternative packaging solutions, here is the GBB page on [Sustainable Packaging](#)

10. Eliminate Waste

Though recycling is important, the more important consideration is eliminating and reducing waste along all steps of the company's processes. The process of going zero waste is essentially focused on waste prevention that encourages the redesign of resource and product life cycles so that ALL materials and products are reused, hence zero waste. The goal is for no trash to be sent to landfills, incinerators, or the ocean which requires a fresh perspective and reevaluation of one's entire operation and waste stream. In addition to periodically evaluating operations to increase efficiency and reduce waste, you must not also forget that some waste streams can, when structured properly, develop into new revenue streams, there can be new revenues discovered from the same material that is usually expressed as an expense on the balance sheet.

11. Switch to More Efficient Lighting

Not only are eco-friendly lights more likely to offer a better working environment for everyone concerned, but their design is such that they have the potential to both decrease your company's overall energy bill, while simultaneously increasing your environmental credentials. The proliferation of more sustainable light fittings also means that it's easier to create different lighting states which are more conducive to a working environment.

Options to consider: LED lighting, CFL light fitting, halogen light fittings, architectural modifications

12. Use Green Energy

If your building hasn't undergone an energy audit, now is the time. Energy audits help you truly understand your energy use and offer recommendations for better efficiency and lower utility bills. You will likely uncover opportunities for alternative clean energy (non-fossil fuel energy sources and processes). Examples include solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, wave power, nuclear and hydropower. Using green energy is one of the initiatives that can have the highest impact. Though oftentimes a high cost is associated with adoption of renewable energy, it can result in more savings in the long run. Some options to consider are opting in to your power being supplied by renewables if available in your municipality or making a plan to reduce your energy usage until having on-site renewable energy is feasible.

13. Reduce Fossil Fuel Use in Vehicles

Emissions related to fossil fuel usage are one of the greatest contributors to climate change. It is important to assess your company's fossil fuel usage beyond just company processes to include individual employee habits and make adjustments to reduce your overall emissions. There are multiple areas in which you have opportunity to reduce your fossil fuel usage:

Remote Work

Remote work provides the opportunity to cut out emissions related to work travel nearly completely. The gas the cars use to travel from the office, the emissions of the bus they travel on, and the fossil fuels that are spent on employees going to and from the office are saved. Whether you incorporate a completely remote working opportunity or a hybrid schedule with some employees in the office some days and others at home, fossil fuel usage is significantly reduced.

Electric Vehicles

You can encourage your employees to use EVs by providing EV charging stations at preferred parking spots. You can also incorporate EVs into your company's fleet of vehicles (if applicable). Electric vehicles (EVs) completely offset fossil fuel usage when charged at stations that receive power from renewables. If you have chosen to incorporate renewable energy into your company's power portfolio, then you have the opportunity to even more greatly lessen your company's environmental impact.

Carpooling

Carpooling lessens fossil fuel usage by reducing the number of vehicles traveling to and from the office. If it is not feasible for your company to incorporate EVs, encouraging carpooling will help reduce your traveling-related emissions. One option is to reduce the size of your parking lot and only provide carpool spots; therefore, employees will be incentivized to carpool as to limit their walk into the office. Another way to incorporate this is by giving a small carpooling bonus to employees who carpool to work.

Public Transit Passes

In cities with well-established public transportation systems, a great way to encourage your employees to reduce their individual fossil fuel usage is by providing public transit passes. You could either offer fully funded or reduced price public transportation passes to offset the cost and increase incentive. Additionally, now many public transportation systems run on renewable energy and even biofuels, so it is even more eco friendly than carpooling.



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES

14. Focus on Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is just as important to the company's success as profits and prioritizing the happiness and satisfaction of your employees will increase profits and produce better quality goods and services.. One example on how to incorporate this is by allowing employees to work from home some days to meet the demands of home while not sacrificing their work. Another way is by providing and enforcing adequate vacation time and allowing mental health days without need of a doctor's note to reflect to your employees you prioritize their mental health. Another tactic is to have 4 day work weeks with flexible hours to complete projects while also understanding your employees are humans and things come up.

Along with providing opportunities for your employees to be as productive and happy as possible in the workplace, a key to satisfaction is the opportunity to provide feedback. You should create an open company culture where employees feel comfortable voicing suggestions and giving feedback where they feel heard and see their suggestions being implemented.

15. Donate to Charities & Causes

Nowadays, companies are cementing themselves as purpose-driven, incorporating a sustainability plan into your company already shows that you prioritize a greater purpose, donating to charities furthers your social responsibility. When considering which charities to donate to, refer to your mission statement and reflect on the core values of your company. You should donate to charities & causes that most closely align with your mission, values, and vision for the type of future your company envisions. Additionally, providing your employees the opportunity to choose which charities & causes to donate to will improve employee well-being and make them feel as if they are working for a company that prioritizes what they believe in.

16. Support your Local Community

When considering which charities and causes to donate to, a good rule of thumb is looking into local charities that seek to improve the quality of life and land in your surrounding area. This will reflect to your employees and customers that you are invested in using your success to give back to the community. Another way to support the local community is by sponsoring local events that will both improve your brand awareness and help a cause in the community. For overseas operations, ensure you are giving back locally by providing fair wages and opportunities for local people to hold positions of management and receive specialized trainings.

17. Embrace Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In order to have a truly inclusive and equitable workplace, your workforce must be representative of the richness and diversity of your local area. You must abolish all hiring biases based upon race, gender, identity, or ability. You must pay all people of equal experience and position the same regardless of their gender. Beyond pay, you should prioritize equal representation of gender and race in positions of power. Additionally, there must be opportunity for people to voice their concerns about harassment and treatment within the workplace and be taken seriously with actionable, enforceable results based upon the level of severity.



EMBRACING ACCOUNTABILITY

18. Use a Framework to Track Progress and Milestones

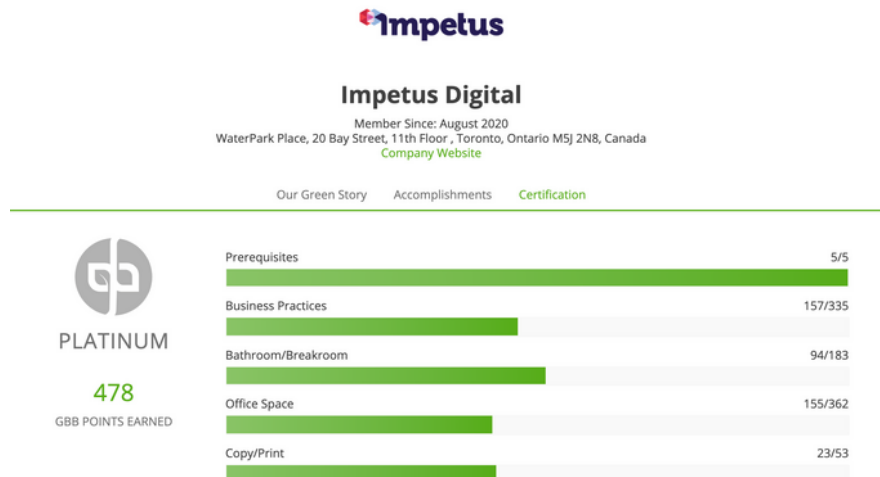
Tracking progress and milestones for your sustainability plan and program brings accountability to your program and makes it easier to assess your current situations and set future goals. Setting goals, identifying deliverables and assigning owners will hold people accountable. Most green teams or sustainability committees need structure to manage their program and projects. This structure starts with a foundation of initiatives that are possible and desired. While measuring and tracking initiatives, you may uncover business risk that was not identified in the past. Ongoing assessment can also uncover opportunities to be more energy efficient and less wasteful. Regardless of how you fare, ongoing tracking will help you prioritize what to work on next.

19. Publish an EcoScorecard

Maintaining a scorecard engages your employees, creates a deeper understanding of sustainability and demonstrates your commitment to being a sustainable business. Publishing your EcoScorecard often, along all stages of the process, will reflect to the world where you began and show you are making real progress.

The GBB Certification Dashboard is the well-known foundation of GBB's program. It summarizes your current sustainable business state and progress, and includes the total number of EcoPoints™ accumulated by completing various green initiatives in the GBB library, your GBB Certification level (Member, Aware, Gold, Platinum) and your list of completed green initiatives.

Example of the GBB EcoScorecard:



20. Calculate your Carbon and GHG Emissions

A carbon footprint-based approach attempts to measure your overall carbon footprint. A company's carbon footprint is the quantity of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that were produced as a result of its operations. Carbon footprints are usually measured in terms of an annual footprint that takes into account the impact of all the company's key activities over the course of a calendar year. Carbon foot printing and emissions accounting is fairly standard practice at large corporations and is usually handled by a specialist consultancy. However, it's possible to get to a reasonably accurate number in-house using online tools and a spreadsheet. That number will allow you to identify the most emissions-intensive areas of your business, opportunities for reductions, and how many offsets you would need to buy to cover your footprint.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

21. Recognize People and Program Achievements

Along the process, it is important to measure progress and recognize those responsible for them. This will reinforce the importance of your sustainability initiatives and provide positive feedback for those who are working on the projects. There are numerous ways to do this including providing a space for updates and achievements during your Green Team and general company meetings and by sharing your achievements to your customer base on your website and social media.

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22. Make Sustainability Part of your Quarterly Company Updates

Begin to include your achievements in sustainability as part of your standard quarterly company updates. This will reflect to your consumer base that you put sustainability as a marker of your company's success along with finances. Sustainability should be an indicator of how successful your company is along with the other traditional markers.



COMPLETING A CERTIFICATION

23. Verify your Results by a 3rd Party

Certification from respected third parties both reinforce and amplify a company's sustainability efforts. Despite the significant bump in engagement greening efforts can provide any business, consumers are rightfully wary of environmental claims made by companies on their own behalf and third-party environmental seals and certifications are clearly viewed as the most trustworthy source of green credibility for business. In fact, consumers are more likely to seek well regarded seals and certifications than government sources to validate a company's green credibility.

There are numerous 3rd party sustainability certification sites, [Green Business Bureau](#) offers our sustainability certification membership where you will have a suite of over 400 initiatives to choose from and get an assessment on where your company stands. Then, you will be able to monitor your progress and share your results via your public EcoProfile™ which incorporates the best practices of leading companies in using the Mission, Priorities/Commitments, Shared Accomplishments & Measurement approach to best convey your sustainability story.

CREATING A MARKETING PLAN

24. Demonstrate your Commitment via Marketing

Promote your Commitments and Accomplishments on your Website

Create a landing page on your website dedicated to your company's sustainability program.

Elevate your Brand and Improve your Reputation Using Social Media

Social media is an effective tool to reach countless people at the click of a button. Make your presence known on social media as a force for sustainability. Share your accomplishments and commitments on social media so your followers can track your progress. Green Business Members are provided a suite of marketing materials they can use to continue to show the world they are committed to sustainability.

25. Use a Green Business Seal to Promote your Green Business

Earn the Benefits you Deserve: Quality Employees, New Customers

Being known as a green business will attract new customers, specifically consumers and companies who seek out sustainable businesses, products and services. Additionally, companies that are greener tend to be perceived as more ethical, reliable and responsible. Employees care about the environment and want to know the company they work for also cares. Your employees will be more fulfilled and satisfied knowing they work for a company that is environmentally responsible. Showing your seal as a green business on your website and products will secure all these benefits and more.



Member

Just by joining, Members get our **GBB Member Seal**



Aware

Simply complete the online self-assessment in the **GBB EcoAssessment™** tool and finish several prerequisites to receive the **GBB Aware Seal**.



Gold

Complete enough initiatives in **GBB EcoPlanner™** to reach 200 EcoPoints™ and earn the **GBB Gold Seal**.



Platinum

Complete enough initiatives to reach 400 EcoPoints™ to earn the **GBB Platinum Seal**