

# Three Rivers Sustainable Business Programme

## Professional Services Sector Sustainability

**THREE RIVERS**  
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS



SUSTAINABLE X



# Professional Services Sector Actions

## Carbon

### Carbon Management:

Green House Gas emissions (measured as CO2 equivalent emissions), is the biggest and most urgent aspect of the sustainability agenda. Though not a big impact area for Professional Services businesses compared to other sectors, it is important to play your part if you are going to engage with people who care.

1. Measure your **Scope 1 and 2** Carbon Footprint
2. Measure your commuting carbon footprint
3. Reduce your business travel footprint
4. Create a strategy for and start measuring your **Scope 3** Carbon Footprint,
5. Consider your offsetting strategy for emissions you cannot eliminate

## Significant Actions For Professional Services Organisations To Consider

## Enable your clients

### Support their transition to a low carbon economy:

Use your position as a trusted advisor to encourage and enable customers to take climate action and improve their business sustainability.

1. Discuss the issues and challenges with your clients
2. Develop understanding and associated skills and knowledge in your team
3. Signpost relevant and useful resources such as grants and guidance
4. Consider incentives for clients who can evidence sustainability improvements
5. Build and share client sustainable development evidence and case studies

## Digitalisation

### Digital transformation:

Maximise efficiency, reduce journeys and paperwork.

1. Replace all paper forms with digital versions
2. Use e-signatures wherever possible
3. Have minimal on premise IT infrastructure (cloud is usually more efficient)
4. Minimise of 'dark data', information duplication and digital storage in always on devices
5. Unnecessary print elimination

## Climate action skills

### Evolve your organisation with stakeholder needs:

Invest in developing your people to support clients with emerging requirements and services.

1. Monitor and assess climate action impact on your stakeholders
2. Find and engage appropriate training and development resources or partners to enable your organisation to evolve
3. Monitor and assess emerging reporting and legislation changes e.g. [TCFD](#), natural capital accounting

## Engage your people

### Retain and attract the best talent:

Identify and harness the passion and interest of people already engaged with the agenda.

1. Involve employees in the development or update of your organisation purpose and valued behaviours
2. Create a sustainability team or group to drive action
3. Link compensation to valued behaviours and initiative success
4. Recognise and support events relevant to your impacts e.g. International Women's Day, Earth Day)

## Diversity & Inclusion

### Measure it and mind the gaps:

Choose a classification and start identifying where your organisation does not reflect it's communities and customer base.

1. Measure your diversity and identify gaps relative to your communities
2. Set long term targets and start taking actions such as identifying diversity of applicants and considering recruitment channels
3. Collaborate with professional bodies, education and recruitment partners to inform your action plan and potentially share resources
4. Ensure people from under-represented groups in your organisation can see people like them in your promotional and recruitment material



### Your Premises And Equipment:

This is an area you will need to address on your journey to Net Zero, which requires you to reduce as much as possible before offsetting what is unavoidable. Actions you can take include:

1. Switch to a renewable energy supplier.
2. Upgrade controls on heating and lighting - including time, zone and sensor controls.
3. Change lighting to low energy or LED.
4. Choose equipment with good Energy Ratings.
5. Install electric vehicle charging facilities.
6. Identify building fabric energy saving improvements you could make.
7. Charge appliances overnight.

## Sustainability definitions

It is important that everyone in your organisation shares the same understanding and definition of sustainability. The three major impact areas are often categorised as environmental, social and economic.

Typically people think of environmental issues including carbon reduction, and clearly this is a key aspect. Sustainability is also about your business succeeding on the long term, and providing positive economic impacts through providing jobs and supporting local supply chains. There are also many social impacts enabled by providing good work and enabling people to develop skills and careers.

Carbon reduction is a good metric, and is supported by improving all environmental impacts such as bio diversity and waste reduction.



### Cambridge English Dictionary:

The quality of being able to continue over a period of time.

This is a key aspect of business sustainability. An organisation must be able to continue to trade while improving their sustainability.

Otherwise a less sustainable alternative may be adopted by their customers in their absence.

### The text book” definition is from the Brundtland Commission:

**“..... development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”**

(WCED, 1987)

# Sustainability Models

Models and frameworks provide useful ways of communicating sustainability, and bringing granularity to impact measurement.

There are many which we will list here and they progress in complexity. The remainder of this section will provide four alternative models. They can all be mapped to each other, so adopting one does not inhibit you from reporting against another, though the less granular your framework, the more work that will be.

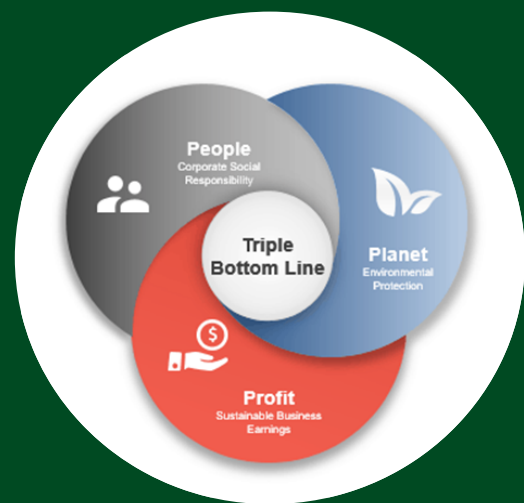
## 1. The Triple Bottom Line

This was very popular for a while but has since been suppressed by more detailed models, and has even been evolved to move profit to prosperity.

This recognises that many organisations have positive social, environmental and economic impacts if they are not for profit or making low profits.

“The triple bottom line wasn’t designed to be just an accounting tool. It was supposed to provoke deeper thinking about capitalism and its future.”

—John Elkington in his  
Harvard Business Review article



## 2. ESG - Environmental, Social And Governance:

Environmental	Social	Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate action</li> <li>Resource depletion</li> <li>Waste</li> <li>Pollution</li> <li>Deforestation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human rights</li> <li>Modern slavery</li> <li>Child labour</li> <li>Working conditions</li> <li>Employee relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bribery and corruption</li> <li>Executive pay</li> <li>Board diversity and structure</li> <li>Political lobbying and donations</li> <li>Tax strategy</li> </ul>

### ESG model from the United Nations Proponent of Responsible Investment (PRI)

Commonly used by investors and bankers, these criteria are used to support investment decisions by ethical funds.

Increasingly they are also used by investors as good business practice to drive better business outcomes and therefore financial returns.

## Sustainable X Model



Extracted from a number of models, this adds a business focus to the key environmental, social and economic impacts of sustainability

Having a framework has helped us manage a lot of things that were difficult to pigeon hole. We now have clear measurement and accountability for sustainability in a structured way"

*MD, Civil Engineering Contractor*

# United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Clearly the goals were written for governments, however businesses are key drivers of the necessary changes.

There are many benefits to using this model as your framework for sustainability. As it's a framework adopted by the UK Government, it is reflected in legislation and cascaded to local government so it's our agenda too.

It also provides a common language and focus to enable people to collaborate on sustainability issues more effectively.

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