

# Three Rivers Sustainable Business Programme

## Distribution Sustainability Sector Guide

**THREE RIVERS**  
SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS



SUSTAINABLE X



## Distribution 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.**

1. Measure your **Scope 1 and 2** Carbon Footprint
2. Measure your commuting carbon footprint
3. Create a strategy for and start measuring your **Scope 3** Carbon Footprint,
4. Create a strategy to get to clean and green delivery, or options
5. Consider your transportation and sourcing location choices
6. Could you install renewables on-site?
7. Consider your offsetting strategy for emissions you cannot eliminate

### Significant Actions For Distribution Businesses To Consider

### Waste

#### Reduce Waste Generated:

Waste management is a powerful driver of sustainability - reducing negative impacts and creating positive opportunities.

1. Classify the waste by type
2. Measure the weight generated
3. Create a waste elimination plan (reduce and reuse)
4. Engage with your suppliers and customers to help e.g. packaging
5. Donate excess items to people in need (ideally local)
6. Aim to recycle what you cannot eliminate
7. Support and enable end of use / life product reuse and recycling

### Digitalisation

#### Digital transformation:

**Maximise efficiency, reduce journeys and paper-work.**

1. Increase flexibility and scalability with cloud based solutions
2. Digitise your inventory and warehousing processes
3. Digitise your ordering and goods received processes
4. Offer digital receipts, delivery ticket, invoicing and payment options
5. Offer digital customer care and feedback channels
6. Minimise the volume of digital data stored

## Your warehousing

### Reduce Your Footprints And Intensity:

#### Maximise productivity and efficiency

1. Can you consolidate your racking into vertical and multi-storey solutions
2. Maximise use of natural lighting and sensor controlled low energy lights
3. Minimise loading dock open door durations
4. For cold stores, use the lowest GWP refrigerants you can
5. Minimise excess inventory

## Packaging

### Eliminate, Re-Use, Reduce, Recycle:

Reduce the material footprint and impact, then support customers to choose the best disposal option for what is unavoidable.

1. Engage with suppliers and customers to minimise delivery packaging and associated impacts
2. Engage with suppliers regarding sustainability credentials of different options
3. Switch to lower impact alternatives when economically viable
4. Eliminate hard to recycle plastics
5. Reduce use of virgin plastic



#### According to Coleman Parkes Research:

- 88% of consumers want packaging to provide more information about sustainability
- 92% of consumers would choose paper-based over plastic-based packaging

## Customer Engagement

### Understand and support what customers want:

#### Provide the information, choices and evidence they value.

1. Make sure all labelling is accurate and correct e.g. Recycled content
2. Use and explain third party certifications consistently
3. Get early engagement and feedback on proposed improvements like refills and no packaging product
4. Explain and highlight relative impacts of different choices where they are known
5. Be transparent, and celebrate successful initiatives with customers

## Branding

### Ensure Your Branding Reflects Your Sustainability Ambitions:

Be consistent and authentic with your branding

1. Think about how you can let your customers know you are a sustainable business
2. Get third party certifications to evidence your product or service quality and ethical standards

## Supply Chain

### Working With Your Supply Chain Can Bring Great Benefits:

Asking good questions is the first step

1. Ensure you are aware of how your products are sourced
2. Check the modern slave labour credentials of your suppliers
3. Ask what your suppliers how they are addressing climate action and sustainability
4. Find out if your logistics providers have carbon reduction plans that you can support
5. Join an industry body aligned to your vertical supply chain

## Engage Your People

### Retain And Attract The Best Talent:

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

1. Create a 'green team' or equivalent to generate ideas and drive action
2. Link compensation to valued behaviours and initiative success
3. Provide appropriate training and development resources
4. Allow people time to report your business in sustainability collaborations e.g. waste collection and distribution initiatives

## Community

### Support The Communities You Impact;

Through providing jobs, supporting local initiatives, education and charities

1. Measure the time and value given to community support and projects
2. Participate in community based initiatives and events
3. Assess your supply chain for their community impacts and contributions
4. Address any employee diversity gaps relative to your community and customers



### 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.

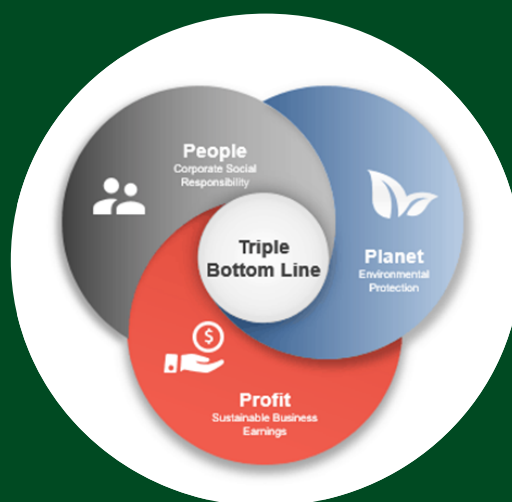
## 1. The Triple Bottom Line

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

- Climate action
- Resource depletion
- Waste
- Pollution
- Deforestation

### Social

- Human rights
- Modern slavery
- Child labour
- Working conditions
- Employee relations

### Governance

- Bribery and corruption
- Executive pay
- Board diversity and structure
- Political lobbying and donations
- Tax strategy

### 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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