

HOW TO CREATE A SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

As questions surrounding the climate crisis enter the forefront of all conversations, it is now essential that businesses of all sizes integrate sustainability into long term strategy.

Understanding sustainability requires successful sustainability policies to ensure the businesses long-term operations and investment opportunities that are tied to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

We believe that there are essential stages to creating a viable sustainability policy:

- Definition Of Sustainability
- Vision
- Mission
- Scope
- Objectives & Targets
- Strategy For Implementation And Monitoring
- Reporting
- Commitment From Leadership Team

These stages can act as a framework to allow your business to get started with creating viable sustainability policies.

Definition Of Sustainability

Sustainability is an incredibly broad term, covering a wide range of topics. When creating a policy you want to define what sustainability means in the context of your organisation and your wider industry.

Vision

A vision is a statement within the policy of how you envision the future of your business. This is the bigger picture.

Mission

This describes how the organisation should go about achieving your vision.

Scope

Include a brief description of the purpose of the sustainability policy. Clearly state what activities your sustainability program applies to within your organisation and state this in your policy. Does it apply to just one part of your operations or all of the activities of your organisation ?

Objectives & Targets

Your organisation should identify key objectives and targets for reaching each objective. It's important that targets are clearly defined, and allow you to measure and quantify your progress.

Consider implementing official SMART targets and associated KPI's that align with the sustainability policy you are aiming to create.

Strategy For Implementation And Monitoring

This section of your policy allows you to describe your implementation strategy for your larger programme.

You'll want to make sure you can continuously measure and report on your objectives to make sure you are on track to meet your targets.

Reporting

Your organisation should commit to periodic, regular reporting to allow you to make adjustments to your operations and communicate continuous improvement within sustainability policies. This is also a good opportunity to align your organisation with any governing bodies or sustainability standards.

Commitment from Leadership Team

Include a section for your organisation's leaders to sign-off, committing to the policy and demonstrating a culture of support and accountability from the top down.

TOP TIPS FOR DRAFTING A SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

We understand that this can feel like an incredibly daunting task, particularly for a small business, so here are our top tips to get the process moving within your business.

- **Establish a Starting Point**

It is important to not feel overwhelmed when beginning your sustainability journey. You must take a step back and look at what your business is capable of doing at this moment and what can be developed in the future.

- Assess your starting point. Do you have any current policies in place? Make a list of what your organisation is currently doing in terms of sustainability.
- Identify opportunities to implement change and also take a moment to identify roadblocks for implementation

- **Align with Industry Standards & Global Standards**

Take a moment to research the global standards on sustainability within your industry. This will often provide higher level goals that can give clear focus to your policy.

This is also a good opportunity for benchmarking and comparability in your industry and highlights areas of interest with suppliers and stakeholders.

- **Engage Stakeholders**

Engaged stakeholders are a key advantage when writing policy and plans as you can often identify challenges more clearly and collaborate on solutions and opportunities.

This will allow you to maximise the impact of your program while creating stronger relationships with aligned values.

Bonus Tip: Take a look at Stakeholder Mapping for your organisation; how to best engage these stakeholders, how to gather feedback and how you will communicate your progress.

- **Gather Feedback**

After you've put in the work to create policies, you'll want to communicate the final policy with all interested parties. Take your stakeholders on the journey with you.

Providing multiple opportunities for feedback and alignment on how often you will communicate progress of your plans as they develop.

USEFUL LINKS

- Sustainable Development Goals Overview: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- Setting SMART Goals within Sustainability: <https://supplychain.edf.org/resources/build-a-sustainability-plan-101-set-meaningful-goals/>

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