

# How to write a sustainability plan

A **sustainability plan**, also known as a net zero strategy and a carbon reduction plan, is a clear plan providing details of your vision as a company, your commitment to net zero, where you are currently in the journey, what your goals are going forward, the actions you will take to achieve these goals and the timeframe you will work to.



## Benefits

1. Communicates your net zero actions to clients, investors, employees and customers.
2. Enables you to communicate your business values, build on positive brand image and customer loyalty.
3. Allows you to measure performance, calculate carbon reduction and cost savings, and identify areas for improvement.
4. Sets a clear path and outlines meaningful targets that your staff and stakeholders can engage with.
5. Builds future resilience and business continuity in the face of climate change.



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# What a sustainability plan should include

## 1. Your vision

Your business is unique. Consider your company values, motivations and vision for the future, and work your answers into a short vision statement. Examples include:

- build a resilient business that's around for the long term
- communicate where you are on your net zero journey
- showcase your company values/ethos
- conduct your business in a responsible way – making every effort to limit your impact on the environment, invest in your staff and support other local businesses
- 'By 2035 we will have reduced our energy consumption by 30 per cent, be operating on green electricity, switched to electric vehicles, reduced our business travel by 50 per cent, be using local supplies'.

## 2. Where you are currently on your journey

Start with your carbon footprint, sharing information on your business impacts and the baseline you are using to measure success upon. If you haven't got this information, see our guide on [how to measure your carbon footprint](#).

If you have already begun your journey, you should also highlight your achievements, challenges and learnings, and show how they relate to your stakeholders and the wider context. Being transparent will serve to build trust with stakeholders. Remember facts and figures are needed, but it's the narrative that will bring it alive and make it meaningful. Find out how to communicate this with our ['Telling the story' guide](#).



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### 3. Goal setting

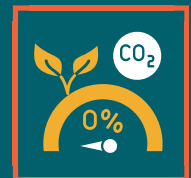
Goal setting should be tailored to fit your business considering your ethos, ambitions, the resources available and what timeframe is realistic for you.



Begin by setting an overarching net zero target, e.g. 'we will reach net zero by 2050'. You may also want to set a shorter-term target that focuses on emissions directly under your control, such as 'we will reach net zero for our scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030'.



For more support on setting targets, visit the [SME Climate Hub](#) and [Science-based Targets Initiative \(SBTi\)](#) websites.



### 4. Your actions

outline the actions you will take as a business to reach your goals, the timeframe and who's responsible. Don't feel overwhelmed by this task. Start with the areas you have direct influence over (scope 1 & 2 - you can find definitions of these in our '[How to measure your carbon footprint](#)' guide).



Include short term actions that are relatively quick and free or low cost to carry out, such as energy efficiency measures and reducing the carbon footprint of your website.



Also include longer term actions, such as working with your supply chain to reduce carbon, gaining accreditation and actions that require capital investment, such as installing solar panels. Check out Enterprise Oxfordshire's [Funding & Grants page](#) for help with accessing finance.



## 5. Monitoring and reporting

The sustainability plan is a working document to be reviewed and updated annually, as you continue to monitor and evaluate your carbon reduction activities and report on your progress.



Remember, it's a long-term plan, so it doesn't have to be perfect first time. Getting started is more important. The plan will evolve over time and you will have the chance to improve it.

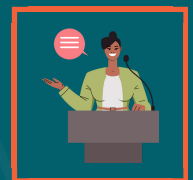


## 6. Communications

Once you have developed your sustainability report, make it publicly available and share it with your stakeholders. This is crucial to raise awareness, showcase your good work and solicit feedback.



Tips on sharing your positive net zero story can be found in our [‘Telling the story’ guide](#).



Download our [sustainability action plan template](#) to help you get started, and [visit our website](#) for more handy tips and advice in our other net zero guides.



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