

What is environmental sustainability?

Introduction

Common environmental sustainability programs and standards:

[ISO 14000 Family – Environmental Management](#)

[ISO 26000 – Social Responsibility](#)

[UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

[GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards](#)

In today's competitive business climate, environmental sustainability is an important part of smart business practice. However, for businesses not involved in sustainable efforts, starting the process can seem overwhelming. This white paper helps explain how to get started and improve your environmental sustainability using best practices and the latest advancements in technology.

Historically, many businesses acted with little regard for the impact their operations had on the environment. But with information now more widely available on how companies operate and an increase in globalization, consumers have become more aware of the concept of social responsibility. Harvard Business Review reported that in 2012, the number one reason that companies were working on sustainability was not to protect the environment or meet social expectations but to reduce costs. Since then, the goal of reducing costs has remained consistently associated with sustainability; however, social license and appealing to long-term investors have also become leading factors.

Businesses often think of environmental sustainability as only being a benefit to their environmental footprint, but it also contributes to long-term growth. In today's competitive environment, creating a thriving business that is environmentally friendly involves more than just reducing waste or conserving energy.

Common focuses of environmental sustainability:



Materials



Energy resources



Energy



Air quality



Water resources



Biodiversity



Products and services

What is environmental sustainability?

Top benefits of improved sustainability

Additional benefits of sustainability:

- *Reduced emissions and environmental footprint*
- *Reduction in penalties and fines*
- *Reduced costs*
- *Improved productivity*
- *Improved employee morale and retention*
- *Improved waste management*

Each business is unique in size, geography and offering, so the benefits of improved sustainability practices will vary for each organization. However, some of the most notable benefits are:

Business differentiation

In today's competitive business environment, it is critical to differentiate your products and services from those of the competition. Factors such as quality, price or customer service can create a competitive advantage, but businesses have also adopted environmental sustainability as a business differentiator. With customers becoming increasingly aware of their own environmental footprint, there is now a great deal of value created by providing a product that was manufactured sustainably.

Social responsibility and social license

The measure of a successful business comes down to more than just generating profit and satisfying shareholders. Consumers expect businesses to conduct business ethically and contribute to the community. While there is no formal documentation, the concept of a 'social license' has become integral for companies to operate in many countries. Depletion of shared resources and pollution are two large parts of environmental sustainability that influence this social license. Without it, companies may struggle to operate and may face public criticism, pressure from stakeholders and may be at a competitive disadvantage within the marketplace.

Improved safety and security

McKinsey's 2017 Global Survey found that the top reason for adopting a focus on sustainability was due to safety and/or security concerns. Fortunately, the costs of using technology to improve sustainability have decreased, making it much more attainable for companies to implement sustainable practices. While improving safety and security benefits any company, these practices may also net a secondary benefit by increasing appeal to long-term investors. Many investors closely examine a company's sustainability efforts to calculate its longevity and determine if it would be wise to invest.

What is environmental sustainability?

Measuring environmental sustainability

Keys to Success

- *Top management buy-in and commitment*
- *Adequate resources to develop, implement and support your environmental management system*
- *Structured documentation and procedures*
- *Appropriate awareness and training*
- *Assigned roles and responsibilities*
- *Auditable sustainability program*

Before you can achieve more sustainable business operations, you must first assess your current footprint to set measurable objectives. International standards such as International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 14001 and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Standards can help you:

- Identify the environmental impacts of your activities
- Identify applicable legal and permit requirements and ensure that they are understood and abided by
- Set the environmental objectives you wish to achieve
- Create environmental management systems that will allow you to achieve your targets

Once a plan is in place, businesses should collect and monitor the data available to identify gaps and take corrective actions. While some companies choose to record data through paper or spreadsheets, this process is often inefficient and does not provide clear insight into operational performance. Alternatively, there are many technologies available to connect worksite devices – such as digital water gauges and CO2 sensors – to a solution that will track this data and provide a clear view into operational sustainability. This approach saves companies time and costs while providing transparency, so all can see the benefits of the sustainability program.

Some common items tracked to measure site sustainability are:

	Indicators
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of input material that is recycled • Waste generated
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption of energy • Energy saved due to increased efficiency
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gasses (GHG) emission index and CO2 emissions • NOx emissions • Amount of materials or waste transported
Water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of water withdrawn/ discharged • Amount of water reused
Energy resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption of energy resources
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and size of land used, including adjacent areas that are protected or of high biodiversity value • Habitats protected or restored • Strategies for managing impacts
Products & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of products and packaging that are reclaimed material, or the product of energy efficient initiatives

What is environmental sustainability?

Becoming environmentally sustainable

Technology has provided companies with cutting-edge tools to collect information related to their operational sustainability, but many organizations lack the resources to monitor and analyze this data. ComplyWorks and Ariscu bridge this gap by empowering our clients with the solutions they need to monitor compliance and improve their sustainability. We take your complex environmental sustainability program and provide easy ways to make sure the proper processes are followed so you can meet your targets.

If you are looking to become more environmentally sustainable, we have outlined a high-level plan to help you get started:

- 1. Establish executive support** – the CEO and executive team should be champions for your sustainability efforts.
- 2. Identify a baseline** – research and analyze the current environmental sustainability of your company. This will allow you to set realistic goals and identify areas for improvement.
- 3. Create a plan** – consult with all necessary stakeholders and create a plan that meets your objectives, while continuing to provide value to your company and stakeholders.
- 4. Set targets** – outline your compliance requirements in ComplyWorks and targets within Ariscu.
- 5. Monitor and correct** – use ComplyWorks' cloud-based solutions and Ariscu's app to track all of the actions taking place on your worksite, so you can identify gaps and implement corrective actions.
- 6. Report** – provide reports and insight to all departments so your plan can evolve and grow with the business.

Together, ComplyWorks and Ariscu can help you manage your environmental sustainability program from the prequalification of contractors through to the implementation and completion of work. We provide one central platform to empower your employees and contractors to meet their necessary requirements, so you can:

- ✔ Improve your environmental sustainability
- ✔ Create clear sightlines to success – everyone will know exactly what is required of them
- ✔ Track and monitor your sites in real-time
- ✔ Own your company's brand and image

Sources:

[1. OECD – Measuring Sustainable Development](#)

[2. Failte Ireland – Environmental Sustainability in Business](#)

[3. IBM – ISO 14001 Overview](#)

[4. The American Bar Association – The Business Case for Environmental Sustainability](#)

[5. Harvard Business Review – McKinsey's Head on Why Corporate Sustainability Efforts Are Falling Short](#)

[6. Coca-Cola – Our 2020 Environmental Goals](#)

[7. McKinsey & Company – Sustainability's Deepening Imprint](#)

See how we can reduce your risk with a [free solution demo](#).
It may be the best decision you make today.