



Association of
Translation Companies
DEFINING STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

ATC Guide Sustainability in Business

2025



Table of Contents

The Case for Sustainable Business	4
What Does a Sustainable Language Service Company Look Like?	5
Getting Started on Your Sustainability Journey	6
Understand the Bigger Picture	6
Define your Focus	7
Compile Resources	7
Enlist your Stakeholders	7
Conduct a Sustainability Audit	8
Measure Your Carbon Footprint	8
Speak to the Professionals	8
Implementing Sustainable Practices	9
Establish Goals from Your Audit	9
Create Sustainability Policies	9
Educate Your Community	10
Certification in Environmental Performance	10
The Better Business Network	10
Green Mark	10
ECOVDIS	11
B Corporation (B Corp)	11
ISO 14001 Certification	11
Setting KPIs and Measuring Progress	11
Commercial Benefits of Sustainability	12
Networking and Brand Awareness	12



Client Acquisition.....	12
Recruitment and Talent Retention.....	12
Increasing Profit.....	12
Testimonial from Comtec Translations (a certified B Corp)	13
Conclusion	13



The Case for Sustainable Business

It is with great pleasure that we bring you the ATC Guide on Sustainability in Business. Following our successful Ethical Business Summit in 2023, it's been the mission of the ATC to continue to champion sustainability, diversity, ethics and inclusion and promote these positive messages to better our industry and enable our members to succeed.

One common theme that arose from the Ethical Business Summit was that delegates wanted to do the right thing by focussing on sustainability. Yet, many delegates felt a sense of overwhelm, when it came to how to go about it, and questioned whether they would truly experience the business benefits that come with a more sustainable approach. That's why we've been working behind the scenes to create this guide to support ATC member language service companies (LSCs) on their journey to more sustainable business.

Sustainability is a wide concept, spanning ethical, human, social and environmental sustainability. For the purposes of this guide, given the current global challenges, we have chosen to put a particular focus on environmental sustainability when providing a framework for sustainability initiatives. As an industry wherein working remotely in a digital manner has been long established, the impact localisation has on the environment may not be immediately apparent. Though with generative AI, data storage, travel and office working prevalent in our industry, there's lots those working in localisation can do to make a positive impact alongside their day-to-day working lives.

I've seen first-hand the multiple benefits that a focus on sustainability can have on an LSC, such as increased team morale, staff retention, enhanced brand reputation and commercial gains. So, whether you're raring to get started or you're already on your sustainability journey and looking for further inspiration, we hope this step-by-step guide has something to offer you.

We look forward to seeing how you implement sustainable practices within your businesses and reap the benefits and commercial rewards available. As ever, we remain at your service for any questions you may have along your sustainability journey.

Best wishes,

James Brown

ATC Vice Chair and Ethical & Sustainable Business Ambassador

What Does a Sustainable Language Service Company Look Like?

When considering what a sustainable LSC may look like, it's important to balance your sustainability initiatives with your commercial goals. A useful framework LSCs can implement is what's become known as the 'Quadruple Bottom Line', or the '4 Ps'. These include:

- ✓ **People:** The ethical and social responsibility a company has to their clients, stakeholders, employees and community.
- ✓ **Purpose:** Your company mission or vision that informs your focus, including your sustainable practices.
- ✓ **Profit:** The importance of financial health to ensure your business can thrive while still making a valuable contribution to the world.
- ✓ **Planet:** The wider impact a business can have on the planet in everything they do.

Considering all 4 Ps in your business strategy ensures you're futureproofing your business to ensure financial success while enabling you to focus on looking after your team and make a valuable contribution to the planet and your community.

As mentioned above, this guide intends to provide a framework for LSCs who are intending to focus on environmental sustainability. When looking at environmental sustainability, the 'Six Rs of Sustainability' offer a useful framework to help us reduce our environmental impact and envisage a future as a more sustainable business. The Six Rs include: Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair. Here's what each of these may look like for an LSC.

- ✓ **Rethink:** Consider your current ways of operating and how these may impact the environment, your team or your local community. Identify more sustainable methods you can explore.
- ✓ **Refuse:** Once you've considered your current approaches, cease operating in a way that is harmful to the planet. This may include changing your energy habits or no longer working with brands who have a negative effect on the environment.
- ✓ **Reduce:** Work to reduce your energy consumption within your business.
- ✓ **Reuse:** Instead of throwing away items you no longer require, identify an alternative use for them, or donate them to a local charity or small business.
- ✓ **Recycle:** From paper and office equipment to general waste, make a conscious effort to recycle, recycle and recycle. And when purchasing new options, look out for sustainable alternatives which may have been made from recycled materials.
- ✓ **Repair:** Instead of buying brand new equipment for your office, fix what you already have.



Getting Started on Your Sustainability Journey

Getting started on your sustainability journey can feel incredibly daunting, with a feeling of overwhelm with how to get started incredibly common. We've therefore outlined seven steps to get you started on your journey.

1. Understand the Bigger Picture
2. Define Your Focus
3. Compile Resources
4. Enlist Your Stakeholders
5. Conduct a Sustainability Audit
6. Speak to the Professionals
7. Measure Your Carbon Footprint

We explore each of these seven steps below.

Understand the Bigger Picture

Before starting on your sustainability journey, it's important to understand the current landscape of the climate crisis and why it's important for LSCs to play their part. As mentioned above, here are some key facts:

- The global average temperature has risen by approximately 1.1°C since the pre-industrial era.
- The rate of warming has significantly increased in recent decades, with 2024 the warmest year in global temperature records going back to 1850.
- The effects of climate change include melting of ice caps, rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events (floods, heatwaves, droughts).
- In 2016, 196 countries signed the international Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. To ensure this, greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 and decline by 43% by 2030. A further key aim is to reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- In 2021 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), the Glasgow Climate Pact was signed by 140 nations who pledged to reach net-zero emissions.
- Furthermore, in 2023 the EU adopted a set of proposals to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030. This would ensure the EU becomes the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

Despite the above accords and progress made, climate change remains a critical threat to the planet. As an industry with a truly global reach in terms of both customers and suppliers, LSCs are in a perfect position to champion these messages and drive real change.

What's more, these are also topics potential clients (and their clients/consumers) care about deeply. We'll explore the commercial advantages of sustainable business later on in this guide.



Define your Focus

Once you've understood the bigger picture, it's time to decide what your focus on sustainability looks like. This could include:

- ✓ What do you feel most passionately about?
- ✓ Where do you feel your business can have the biggest impact?
- ✓ What benefits would this bring for your stakeholders (team, clients, linguists, community)?
- ✓ What benefits would this bring for your business?
- ✓ How much time can you allocate within your business to sustainability initiatives?
- ✓ Who will be involved?
- ✓ When will we begin?

While it's tempting to want to do everything all at once, starting with a narrower focus will enable you to better achieve the objectives and the desired outcomes/impact you're working towards.

Compile Resources

From thought leadership and reports to checklists and policy templates, there are a whole host of resources online – beyond this guide! – to help you get started with being more sustainable. We've included a selection of useful websites below.

- ✓ [IOD \(Institute of Directors\)](#)
- ✓ [FSB \(Federation of Small Businesses\)](#)
- ✓ [NBS \(Network for Business Sustainability\)](#)
- ✓ [Council for Sustainable Business](#)
- ✓ [Green Intelligence](#)
- ✓ [Institute of Sustainability Studies](#)
- ✓ [Carbon Trust](#)

Enlist your Stakeholders

Sustainability is not something one can accomplish alone as the business owner. A sustainable business is not something that can be built in a day, so it's important to take your team with you on the journey. Here's how:

- ✓ Promote your mission and sustainability objectives internally.
- ✓ Conduct a sustainability survey with your team.
- ✓ Gauge an understanding of their concerns from their responses.
- ✓ Invite team members to support you with sustainability initiatives.
- ✓ Set up working groups based on key areas of interest.
- ✓ Establish a set amount of time per month for engaged team members to focus on their sustainability initiatives.
- ✓ Assign roles/tasks and continuously monitor progress.



Conduct a Sustainability Audit

A sustainability audit is essential to understand your LSC's current performance when it comes to sustainable business practices. A sustainability audit may include, but not be limited to:

- ✓ Greenhouse gas emissions (see below for advice on how to measure your carbon footprint)
- ✓ Waste usage and management
- ✓ Water usage
- ✓ Energy usage
- ✓ Corporate Social Responsibility practices
- ✓ Community impact
- ✓ Regulatory compliance

Measure Your Carbon Footprint

There are a number of websites online which enable you to calculate your carbon footprint and guide you to begin offsetting your emissions. Here are just a few of online Carbon Footprint Calculators available:

- ✓ [Planet Mark](#)
- ✓ [Ecologi](#)
- ✓ [SME Climate Hub](#)
- ✓ [Carbon Trust](#)
- ✓ [World Wildlife Fund \(WWF\)](#)

Speak to the Professionals

Despite your research and best efforts, sustainability can feel overwhelming and difficult to see immediate impact from your efforts. It can also be time consuming. So when in doubt, speak to the professionals.

Speak to your HR team (or your external HR agency) for advice on how to get started with conducting your audit. Connect with industry colleagues who can share best practice. And get in touch with the ATC who will be able to signpost you to companies who support businesses on their sustainability journeys.

We're all in this together!

Implementing Sustainable Practices

Once you have laid the foundations for your sustainability journey, it's time to operationalise and implement these practices. We've listed 5 ways in which LSCs can get started with implementation:

1. Establish goals from your audit.
2. Create sustainability policies.
3. Educate your community.
4. Obtain certification in environmental performance.
5. Set KPIs and measure your progress.

Establish Goals from Your Audit

Following your audit, it's time to operationalise your sustainability plans. Firstly, it's important to set your LSC a selection of SMART objectives that you can easily work towards and keep track of. Some examples may include:

- ✓ Reducing your waste consumption by X%
- ✓ Reducing your carbon footprint internally by X%
- ✓ Reducing your carbon footprint within your supply chain by X%

In addition to your focus on Purpose and Planet, as a business it's important to focus on the other 2 'Ps' when it comes to sustainable and ethical business: People and Profit. We recommend establishing goals based on possible outcomes achieved based on the impact of your focus on purpose and sustainability. These may include:

- ✓ Revenue
- ✓ Profit
- ✓ Employee engagement
- ✓ Staff retention
- ✓ Client retention/growth
- ✓ Client acquisition

Create Sustainability Policies

Create an actionable Sustainability Policy which serves as the cornerstone of your sustainability plans and operations. This policy should include:

- ✓ Your mission statement
- ✓ Your company values
- ✓ Overview of your environmental impact
- ✓ Key stakeholders
- ✓ Their responsibilities
- ✓ Your sustainability strategy
- ✓ Short term goals
- ✓ Long term goals



In addition to guiding your business, this policy is evidence to your clients of your commitment to sustainable practices.

Educate Your Community

This includes:

- ✓ **Team:** Understand what's important to them and share useful resources to help educate them. It's your team who will be the champions of this message to your community and help bring your plans to life.
- ✓ **Clients:** Understand what your clients truly value and promote your sustainability initiatives to them via the relevant channels. By involving your clients in your journey, you'll attract both trust and admiration, leading to deeper relationships.
- ✓ **Suppliers:** As LSCs we work with hundreds, if not thousands of freelance linguists and other language specialists each year. This provides you with a substantial audience with whom you can share resources and best practice and encourage more sustainable ways of working.

Certification in Environmental Performance

Maintaining momentum on your sustainability journey alongside day-to-day business demands can be a challenge. Obtaining professional certification or joining a likeminded community are effective ways of ensuring you remain accountable and are striving for continuous improvement.

Client-side procurement teams are also increasingly requiring evidence of high standards of environmental stewardship and sustainability when making buying decisions. This gives clients that confidence that they are avoiding 'greenwashing' and working with suppliers and partners who walk the walk. Demonstrating certification when responding to an RFP can often be the difference between landing a contract, or not.

From ECOVADIS to ISO certification, there's a range of standards and communities available to suit every size and type of business. Our top 5 recommendations are included below.

The Better Business Network

The Better Business Network is an inclusive network for purpose-driven business owners and leaders who want to grow their business and make the world a better place. The network envisions a world where all businesses are a force for good, advocating for sustainability, government support and creating regenerative practices, contributing to a better world. Membership begins at £30 per month and provides access to events, tools, resources, workshops and networking opportunities to help grow your business in a sustainable manner.

<https://betterbusinessact.org/>

Green Mark

Green Mark is an action-driven environmental accreditation that helps businesses reduce their environmental impact with a clear, web-based certification process. Certification involves a process



which reviews your performance, identifies the steps required to become more sustainable and helps you establish an environmental policy and action plan to help ensure future business decisions are made sustainably.

<https://greenmark.co.uk>

ECOVADIS

EcoVadis is a globally recognised assessment platform that rates businesses' sustainability based on four key areas: environmental impact, labour, and human rights standards, ethics, and procurement practices. Companies undertake a self-assessment process to provide evidence of their sustainability performance, which is evaluated by sustainability experts.

<https://ecovadis.com>

B Corporation (B Corp)

B Corporation (B Corp) certification is awarded to companies who meet high standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. Verified by B Lab, a company is evaluated and granted status as a certified B Corp based on their practices and outputs across the following five impact areas: governance, workers, community, the environment, and customers. A truly global community, as of 2024 there are over 2,000 B Corps in the UK alone.

<https://bcorporation.uk/>

ISO 14001 Certification

ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management specifies the requirements for an environmental management system that an organisation can use to enhance its environmental performance. It is intended for use by an organisation seeking to manage its environmental responsibilities in a systematic manner that contributes to the environmental pillar of sustainability, bringing value for the organisation, environmental and associated parties. The ATC offers certification to ISO 14001:2015 standard through our certification body ATC Certification.

<https://atccertification.com/iso-14001-certification/>

Setting KPIs and Measuring Progress

Lastly, to ensure your LSC is successfully implementing business practices, it's essential to set KPIs to ensure you're monitoring your performance against your targets. Examples of elements you can measure include:

- ✓ Waste reduction and recycling rate
- ✓ Carbon footprint
- ✓ Energy consumption and energy use
- ✓ Water consumption and water use
- ✓ Supply chain sustainability



Commercial Benefits of Sustainability

Being a sustainable business extends beyond people, purpose and the planet. It's proven that embracing sustainable business has a direct positive effect on a fourth 'P', and that's profit. Below we share 4 of the key commercial benefits to being a sustainable LSC.

Networking and Brand Awareness

Joining a likeminded community provides access to a pool of potential customers who share the same values as you. These communities offer regular networking events, both online and in person. The Better Business Network discovered in their 2023 membership survey that 84% of members had worked with or collaborated with other members since joining.

Client Acquisition

Brands are considering values more than ever in the decision-making process. In fact, over 40% of consumers actively choose brands with environmentally friendly values. Demonstrating your sustainable practices on your website, social media and in your marketing communications will ensure you stand out from the crowd. Greenly Institute reports that companies with sustainable procurement practices have as much as a 15-30% increase in brand value, meaning customers find more value in them as a supplier/partner. At a time when an estimated 90% of procurement teams are seeking carbon-neutral suppliers, embracing sustainability is a must.

Recruitment and Talent Retention

Climate change remains a top area of concern for millennials (59%) and Gen Z (62%). At a time when attracting and retaining talent is a top challenge for approx. 51% of UK businesses, embracing sustainability is a surefire way to attract a swathe of candidates to fill your vacancies. In terms of talent retention, engaging your team in your sustainability journey can reduce staff turnover and avoid lengthy and expensive recruitment processes. The results are clear:

- IMEA discovered that 86% of young people will stay at a company longer if the company demonstrates sustainable business practices.
- The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that companies with strong sustainability programmes experience a 38% increase in loyalty.

Increasing Profit

According to McKinsey's research, companies with strong environmental, social and governance (ESG) credentials save between 5% to 10% per annum in overhead costs. This can be from a range of means, including switching energy providers/suppliers, changing work and travel habits and embracing automation.



Testimonial from Comtec Translations (a certified B Corp)

So, do you remain unconvinced that a focus on ethical and sustainable business is right for you? Here's a testimonial from Sophie Howe of Comtec Translations, the UK's first B Corp certified LSC, who shares their journey and outcomes thus far.

"We've always been a company that operates with integrity, so joining the B Corp movement and being held accountable for our actions was a logical step for us. To be officially aligned with the B Corp message makes good business sense too, as there is a growing movement for the corporate world to operate in a more holistic, people and planet-centred way, and that's what B Corp's vision is all about. Our focus on sustainable and ethical business has further enhanced our support for community of freelance linguists.

In the last year, I'm thrilled that we've been able to expand on our annual events by launching our bimonthly linguist 'lunch and learn' webinar series, offering free training on a range of topics from transcreation and post-editing to networking and LinkedIn.

From a commercial standpoint, we've been overwhelmed by the impact B Corp has had on our business. Since achieving certification, we've collaborated with over 25 fellow B Corps. This has included successful customer acquisition, mutual referrals, knowledge sharing/training opportunities and joint marketing initiatives. Our ongoing AI in Content Creation webinar series with a fellow B Corp brand has attracted interest from over 300 brands.

Finally, operating as a business with purposes gives us a clear framework for future growth and evolution. In the next phase of our B Corp journey, we are focusing on refining our cultural services offering and building connections with purpose-led businesses, in the B Corp movement and beyond. We've also recently surveyed over 500 freelancers regarding their thoughts on AI, which will enable us to put into place an action plan to support and upskill our community as AI becomes ever more prevalent in our industry."

Sophie Howe, CEO, Comtec Translations

Conclusion

Thank you very much for taking the time to read our guide. We hope this guide has offered useful advice on how to get started on your sustainability journey, and an effective framework to explore other areas of sustainability within your business. Remember, this is just the start of an ongoing journey of continuous progress and improvement to being a more sustainable business.

Focus on progress, not perfection, and you'll reap the rewards, see your impact, and enjoy the ride. We can't wait to see what you accomplish!