



# Sustainable Business During the Recovery

Unite  
against  
COVID-19

**SPECIAL:  
IMMEDIATE ACTION  
TOOL**



## Recovery sustainability: immediate action tool

**The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been severe. The recovery may be difficult and drawn out. These times require sustainability and resilience more than ever. We've created a quick selection of our top sustainability guides to help you through.**

Business is especially challenging right now. There's an understandable temptation to default to 'business as usual'. And you might slip into a short term 'survival mode'. We know there is a need to respond to the changing circumstances quickly. There are many new pressures on decision makers.

That's why we have made this 'guide to the guides' of the Sustainable Business Network available for free. It selects the easy and immediate things you can do now.

Even under these constrained conditions you can use this to help install the sustainability and resilience your business needs.

You can also use it as a route to the more detailed advice and support SBN offers.

Taking these steps will help your business survive and thrive in these times. It will also assist the New Zealand economy, as a whole, to shift onto a more resilient path.

That means a more prosperous future for all of us.

Too busy, want help, or want to go deeper?

SBN Advisory is offering quick online business sustainability health checks based on this guide.

Contact [james@sustainable.org.nz](mailto:james@sustainable.org.nz) to find out more.



## Recovery sustainability: immediate action tool

### Energy Efficiency

#### Office-based

**Left unchecked, climate change will lead to greater and longer lasting disruptions to our businesses and way of life than the Covid-19 pandemic.**

This means acting on it now remains the right and sensible thing to do. In addition, in toughened times getting on top of your business's energy efficiency can offer substantial cost savings.

Every bit helps right now. Many New Zealand businesses can save up to 20% on their energy bill, simply with smarter energy use.

You may find yourself with changed premises and layouts. You may have different staffing and different resource needs.

You may be returning to premises that have been closed up for weeks. You may find you currently require significantly less capacity in things like chillers and storage. So it's worth taking the time to ensure your energy saving approach is still relevant to any new set up.

This is another valuable project staff can be working on if they have any enforced down time. This can also make your offerings more attractive to consumers. They are more conscious of these issues than ever, and may have less money to spend.

SBN's [Energy Saving Guide](#) gives you a full run down of the energy saving steps you can take.

If you find yourself refurbishing your premises completely, or moving to new premises, access our [Circular Economy Model Office Guide](#).

It will help you move with the minimum of waste and its associated costs.

SBN's [Smart Office Guide](#) provides a complete immediate action checklist to check and hone your energy efficiency for your current needs.

Here are some basic tips to get you started:

#### Maintenance:

- Tune-ups can be done at little or no extra cost. They involve changing existing equipment rather than buying new things.

#### TVs and computers:

- Switch off TVs, computers and monitor screens when not in use, or install timers to switch them off automatically. This saves energy and prolongs the life of your equipment.

#### Insulation:

- Install ceiling and floor insulation in areas you heat and cool. Repair seals on external doors and windows. Wrap your hot water boiler and piping with pipe lagging.

#### Lighting

- Install movement-sensitive sensors or timers to ensure lights are only on when needed. Switch off after hours, leaving only enough to ensure security. Switch to LEDs, and use natural light. Make the best use of natural light by opening blinds and installing skylights.

#### Photocopiers

- Switch off office equipment when not in use. Use power-saving features.

#### Kitchen and staff facilities

- Regularly check staff facilities like ovens, fridges and pipes for leakage and ensure temperatures are set for safety and efficiency. After hours, ensure lights and equipment are turned off where this doesn't affect safety.

#### Heating and cooling

- Check the settings in your office. Tune them to suit the spaces and people who use them.



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### Light industry

#### Chillers and refrigeration:

- If your business has high cooling costs, efficient refrigeration can yield major savings. Food retailers and meat processors use about two thirds of their electricity for refrigeration. In the wholesale food sector, that figure can be more than 85% of total energy use. Save 15% through changing to efficient use and maintenance, and save 40% of energy used by upgrading, replacing and rationalising equipment.

#### Compressed air:

- About 85% of energy used to run an air compressor turns into heat. Explore ways to use this waste heat, like ducting hot air from cooling vents to working areas and using a heat exchanger to heat water.

#### Motor drives and systems:

- Service gearboxes regularly. Replace standard V-belts when required. Bypass soft starter units and install high efficiency motors.

#### Fan systems:

- Investigate variable speed drives (VSD) and isolate circuits when not required.

#### Boilers/process heat

- Regularly tune boilers (six-monthly) to maximise efficiency. Investigate opportunities to recover heat, and options for switching to wood energy.

To put things on a future proof footing, SBN's [Climate Action Guide](#) provides easy resources for calculating and lowering your carbon emissions, including the free [Annual Carbon Emissions Calculator](#).

These resources are set to be updated and expanded soon, as part of SBN's Climate Action 20/25 initiative.



## Recovery sustainability: immediate action tool

### Waste

**There's a temptation to cut corners on waste when things are tough, sometimes to save time.**

But we all know this just adds to cost and inefficiency.

Some waste management operators may have been adversely affected by the crisis.

You may have to switch materials on some of your products, so now is a great time to check your options. And your waste management may be affected by changes in staffing and location.

SBN's [Reducing Office Waste Guide](#) has a host of easy ideas to help.

You can also check the [SBN Directory](#) for sustainable waste operators in your area.

As well as minimising waste in any production and distribution you are responsible for (see the Procurement and Plastic Packaging guidance), here are some quick and easy wins for your own premises:

- Set up effective options for reducing, reusing and recycling in the office and the staff room.
- Work with your suppliers to reduce the amount of waste you deal with e.g. packaging.
- Remove rubbish bins from all desks. Replace with recycling and small composting bins.
- Include recycling boxes for both single sided and double sided paper on all desks.
- Where practical, actively maintain a worm farm, or Bokashi compost bin, to maximise organic waste diversion. If you set up a Bokashi system, staff can take it home.
- Keep each area tidy and litter free in the office, as well as any external areas, to limit environmental impacts.
- Opt for as many paper-free communication options as practical.
- Create a rooftop or indoor garden. This can use any fertiliser generated from the worm farm.
- Identify workplace 'green heroes' (people who already compost at home). Work together to set up composting and recycling systems.
- Develop a policy around e-waste. Ensure staff know how to dispose of mobile phones and other electronic waste.



## Recovery sustainability: immediate action tool

### Transport

**In the absence of their standard commute many staff may have found a new passion for walking and cycling.**

They've also had a crash course in teleworking. Now is the time to capitalise on that. Support their wellbeing and reduce transport pollution. In addition, fleets may experience significant changes in their capacity and requirements. This provides further opportunities for efficiencies and improvements.

SBN's [Sustainable Transport Guide](#) provides the signposts to all the information you need. Also check our [Workplace Cycling Guide](#) and [Employer E-Bike Guide](#) for the best way to join the two wheel revolution.

Here are some ideas to get you started.

#### **Reduce transport pollution and cost by:**

- Continuing to enable staff to work from home.
- Using remote meeting technologies to avoid air travel.
- Supporting working hub (shared space) options.
- Considering supplier location when procuring. Prioritise local suppliers where possible.
- Using resources more efficiently to reduce the need for transportation of supplies.

#### **Shift staff behaviour towards sustainable transport by:**

- Reducing, or eliminating, the provision of free/subsidised staff parking.
- Offering staff benefits to incentivise non-car commuting e.g. good cycling facilities, public transport passes.
- Introducing fleet e-bikes for local work-related/business travel.
- Encouraging staff to use car pool/ride share services.
- When moving premises, shift your business close to good public transport facilities or cycleways.

#### **Further improve your transport options by:**

- Introducing electric vehicles into your fleet.
- Using sustainable biofuels.
- Using car share services as a full or partial alternative to your own fleet.
- Supporting suppliers that use lower impact modes of transport.





## Procurement

**It's more important than ever to partner with and support suppliers that do the right thing by our local economies.**

In a turbulent economic market, you might find you lose suppliers or need to find new ones.

SBN's [Sustainability Question Bank for Procurers](#) will assist in identifying any reputational risks and opportunities in your supplier partnerships, and help you get the best deal for your business and your community.

**Here are the fundamental questions you should ask:**

- How do suppliers measure their environmental and social impact?
- How do they manage their performance on it?
- What targets have they set?
- What initiatives or projects have they put in place?
- How are they performing?
- Where – if anywhere – are they looking for help, or to stay abreast of relevant innovation?

## Plastic Packaging

**The issues around plastic packaging have not gone away during this crisis.**

There's heightened interest in public safety and hygiene.

There's also a current need for more 'non-contact' delivery of goods. There are business opportunities to be had in meeting current needs. For example, there may be a greater appetite for simplified packaging if this helps get the right goods to people on time.

This may mean there are choices to be made on new packaging.

Also, consider changes to the availability and capacity of recycling systems in your area. It may be worth double checking before making any changes.

Check out SBN's [NZ Plastic Packaging Guidance](#). It will help you make informed choices on your options.

It includes a full decision guide on the use of compostable packaging.

Here are the basics.

At this time all packaged goods suppliers should:

- Audit the amount and types of packaging they use to create a baseline to work from.
- Reduce or eliminate problematic single-use packaging and, wherever possible, seek alternatives to single-use plastic options, particularly reusable models.
- Only use compostable packaging where the necessary processing infrastructure is readily accessible. Move to plastics with the highest recycling value (clear PET and natural HDPE).
- Avoid laminates where possible.
- Source recycled content, ideally from New Zealand, to keep plastics in high-value circulation and out of the environment.

At this time all packaged goods designers should:

- Ensure packaging is designed in line with a circular economy as genuinely reusable, recyclable or compostable.





## Product Stewardship

**Leaner times may make take-back schemes and resource reuse an even better proposition than before.**

Consider what options you can quickly offer for taking back materials or offering repair and maintenance on your products.

This could expand your offering. It could also help employ staff who might otherwise be surplus to your needs in a slowed market.

SBN's [Product Stewardship Guide](#) gives you a quick and easy template to assess whether product stewardship could benefit your business right now.

Here are our top tips:

- Design new products for reuse, disassembly and harvesting of key component parts/materials.
- Choose materials with durability and reuse in mind.
- Involve stakeholders from the start and be transparent.
- Partner with other businesses that share similar sustainability values.
- Think through logistics carefully. This can make a huge difference to how smoothly things operate.
- Audit your suppliers and make sure they are auditing their downstream partners.

Consider the Ministry for the Environment's [Guidelines](#) for a regulated scheme.

You don't have to follow them, but they demonstrate best practice. Considering them will help you if you later decide to apply for accreditation.

Keep in mind if your product may be declared a priority product requiring mandatory product stewardship in the future. There are companies like 3R, which can help you do this.





# Contact us

We're here to help during this tough recovery phase, and beyond.

Get in touch.



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