

The RECOVER Guide:

# How to truly become a green entrepreneur





# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

At a time when addressing the immense environmental challenges is becoming more and more urgent, young people have a unique opportunity to make a difference, especially through entrepreneurship. By adopting an environmentally ethical approach in their business efforts, they can actively contribute to a sustainable future and, at the same time, establishing successful and eco-conscious enterprises.

The **RECOVER Guide: How to truly become a green entrepreneur** offers practical tips and suggestions to help young people apply eco-friendly practices into your entrepreneurial efforts, empowering them to create enterprises that will not only be profitable but also make a positive impact on the environment.

So, whether you are a young person that starts out or aspires to improve your business, this guide will help you truly become a green entrepreneur.



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# Things you can do before starting a business



# Things you can do before starting a business



At personal level



## Explore your passion for sustainability

Before jumping into the world of business, take some time to think about **what really drives you**, especially when it comes to caring for the planet. Ask yourself **why sustainability matters to you** and **how you can make a difference through a business**. Understanding your personal connection to environmental issues will help you stay motivated and focused on your goals as a young green entrepreneur.

## Learn about eco-friendly practices

Make it a priority to **learn about the green practices that are shaping the future**. Whether it's sustainable fashion, renewable energy or zero-waste living, delve into these topics and **learn how they can be applied in a business environment**. This knowledge will give you the tools to create a business that not only makes money, but also makes a positive impact on the environment.



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# Things you can do before starting a business



At personal level



## Connect with other eco-conscious people

Surround yourself with a network of individuals who **share your passion for sustainability**. Participate in **green initiatives**, join **environmental advocacy groups**, and connect with **mentors** who have experience in **sustainable and green entrepreneurship**. This network can provide valuable advice, collaboration opportunities, and emotional support as you navigate the challenges of starting and growing a green business.

## Conduct a personal environmental audit

Carry out an **environmental audit of your personal life** to understand your own environmental footprint. Assess your **energy consumption**, **waste production**, **transport habits** and **purchasing decisions**. By making personal changes to reduce your environmental impact, you can not only **lead by example**, but also **gain practical insight into the challenges and opportunities of sustainable living**. What this experience will do is make you a more credible and authentic green entrepreneur.



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# Things you can do before starting a business



At business level



## Build a sustainable brand

For businesses that prioritize sustainability, it is crucial to select a name that accurately reflects their mission and values. A **name** that is **memorable**, **profound**, and **distinctive** is essential. Once the name has been chosen, protection through **trademarks** and **service marks** is necessary. This guarantees the protection of your brand from unauthorized use, which in turn fortifies the identity of your business and prevents legal hassles. Taking these measures at the outset is beneficial for the development of a recognizable and trustworthy brand that is consistent with your values and promotes long-term success.

## Develop a green business model canvas

The green business model canvas is an essential resource for green entrepreneurs, as it offers a structured approach to the development and definition of a sustainable business model. It emphasizes **environmental** and **social value** while incorporating **critical components**, including **stakeholder engagement**, **key activities**, **customer segments**, and the **value proposition**. Entrepreneurs are guided through a systematic process by the canvas, which guarantees that their business not only meets market demands but also addresses substantial environmental challenges.



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# Things you can do before starting a business



At business level



## Evaluate the viability of your business idea

To assess the viability of your eco-friendly business concept, begin by ensuring that your concept is consistent with both financial and environmental sustainability. **Conduct targeted market research** with an emphasis on ecological impact, **engage with potential consumers** to assess interest, and **contemplate piloting** a small-scale version of your concept. Using this method guarantees that your business is not only profitable but also able to adjust to evolving circumstances and remain committed to its ecological mission. Through this action, you establish a strong foundation for long-term success.

## Create a realistic financial plan

It is essential to **incorporate realistic, field-proven data** into your financial plan for your green business rather than relying on mere hypotheses. Begin by formulating a thorough financial strategy that encompasses a **detailed income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow projections**. This will assist you in evaluating the financial stability and readiness for your business investment. In order to obtain funding, it is advisable to investigate both conventional and unconventional sources, including crowdfunding platforms, microcredits, and ethical institutions, which are in accordance with the principles of environmentally friendly businesses.



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# Green entrepreneur supports

- **Horizon Europe** is the European Union's research and innovation initiative. This program provides funding for initiatives that address topics such as the development of green technologies, environmental sustainability, and reducing the effects of climate change.
- The **LIFE Program** a fund established by the EU to support environmental and climate action initiatives. This initiative encourages projects that provide practical solutions to meet environmental and climatic objectives.
- The **European Green Deal** is a policy and financial program aimed at helping Europe achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. It also provides chances to support and fund green entrepreneurship.
- The **COSME** program is an EU initiative aimed at improving SMEs' competitiveness. It offers financial tools and networking opportunities to assist small and medium-sized enterprises expand, including green projects.
- **EIC Accelerator** is the European Innovation Council's grant and investment program that fosters innovative and scalable business concepts. It prioritizes sustainability-related innovations and ecological technologies.

## Extra steps to fortify your green entrepreneurial journey

While the foundational steps to prepare for your green business are essential, there are additional actions you can take to ensure your venture is not just sustainable but also resilient and impactful.

Here are some extra suggestions to consider:

- **Connect with nature:** Regularly immerse yourself in nature to draw inspiration and understand sustainable principles directly from the environment.
- **Get involved locally:** Participate in local environmental projects to gain practical insights and community connections that can inform your business.
- **Build green skills:** Enhance your expertise by acquiring relevant certifications or skills in sustainability, adding credibility to your green venture.
- **Test ideas with a micro-project:** Start small with a pilot project to refine your concept and gather valuable feedback before scaling up.



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# Things you can do while establishing your business



# Things you can do while establishing your business



At personal level



## Build a network of like-minded Individuals

Surround yourself with other green entrepreneurs and sustainability advocates.

Join local and online communities focused on environmental issues, attend green business events, and participate in sustainability-focused networks.

Building these connections can provide inspiration, share knowledge, and offer support as you navigate the challenges of building a green business.

## Adopt a minimalist lifestyle

- Embrace a minimalist approach in your personal life to reduce your environmental footprint.
- Simplify your lifestyle by consuming less and choosing quality over quantity.

By focusing on reducing unnecessary purchases and waste, you can better understand sustainability and apply these principles to your business practices, fostering a culture of mindful consumption.



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# Things you can do while establishing your business



At personal level



## Adopt sustainable habits

As a green entrepreneur, start by adopting sustainable habits in your daily life.

This could include reducing energy and water consumption at home, minimizing waste by recycling, and choosing sustainable transportation methods like biking or using public transit.

These personal actions set an example and help build a strong foundation of sustainability values that can be integrated into your business.

## Educate yourself and stay informed

Continuously educate yourself on sustainability practices and environmental issues.

Attend workshops, read books, and follow experts in the field to stay informed about the latest trends and innovations.

This knowledge will help you make informed decisions and incorporate the best sustainable practices into your business model.



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# Things you can do while establishing your business



At business level



## Adopt sustainable business practices

Adopting eco-friendly measures not only helps protect the environment but can also reduce operational costs in the long term and attract conscious consumers. Consider energy efficiency by using renewable energy sources and low-consumption equipment, and set up a waste management system to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials.

Additionally, choose sustainable materials and optimize the use of natural resources to minimize waste at all stages of your operations.

## Establish a green supply chain

From the beginning, select suppliers who share your commitment to sustainability. Look for those who use ethical practices and eco-friendly materials.

Also, optimize your transportation and logistics processes to reduce your carbon footprint by using low-emission vehicles and efficient routes.

By promoting ethical practices and working with partners who adhere to fair labor standards, you can build a supply chain that reinforces your sustainability values.



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# Things you can do while establishing your business



At business level



## Implement a circular economy model

Design your business processes around a circular economy model where materials and products are reused, refurbished, or recycled rather than discarded.

This approach reduces waste and maximizes resource use, making your business more sustainable and resilient in the long term.

## Incorporate green certifications and standards

Strive to meet recognized environmental certifications and standards, such as B Corp, LEED, or Fair Trade.

These certifications can guide you in implementing sustainable practices and serve as a mark of credibility for consumers who value environmental and social responsibility.

Additionally, they provide a framework to measure and improve your sustainability efforts over time.



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# Platforms to build a network of like-minded individuals

- **LinkedIn Groups:** Join LinkedIn groups focused on green entrepreneurship and sustainability, such as "Sustainable Business Network" or "Green Entrepreneurs."
- **GreenBiz Community:** Connect with sustainability professionals and green entrepreneurs through GreenBiz's community platform.
- **Sustainable Business Network (SBN):** Access resources and networking opportunities for businesses committed to sustainability through SBN.
- **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Community:** Join GRI's network to connect with professionals focused on sustainability reporting and practices.
- **Eco-Business:** Participate in forums and events on Eco-Business to network with sustainability professionals.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Hub:** Engage with individuals and organizations working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Green Building Council Networks:** Connect with sustainability professionals through local Green Building Councils' events and forums.
- **Environmental Defense Fund (EDF):** Network with other green entrepreneurs through EDF's sustainability programs and initiatives.

## Green certifications and standards for green entrepreneurs

- **B Corp Certification**

Certification for companies meeting high standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. It evaluates how a company impacts its employees, customers, suppliers, community, and the environment.

- **LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)**

Certification for buildings and construction projects demonstrating high levels of energy efficiency and sustainability. Focuses on sustainable design, efficient resource use, and reducing carbon footprint.

- **Fair Trade Certification**

Certification ensuring products meet fair trade standards, meaning farmers and workers receive fair wages, work in safe conditions, and have access to community development opportunities.

- **Cradle to Cradle Certified™**

Certification evaluating products based on their entire life cycle, from design to recycling. Focuses on material reuse and positive environmental impact throughout the product's life.



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# Things you can do while running your business





# Things you can do while running your business



At personal level



## Paperless approach

- Set up a 'paperless' office by storing all documents digitally on computers.
- Use e-bills, app notifications, and internet banking for financial transactions, instead of issuing paper bills and invoices.
- Avoid paper usage and printing by using virtual sign-off, fillable PDF forms and online ordering, or any other document in digital form.

## Set PCs to auto-shutdown

- Encourage the change of the non-shutdown habit of those colleagues who have it.
- Write down and share reminders to shut down the PCs when people are leaving their desks.
- Install software that performs automatic shutdown of a PC.
- Set predetermined times for shutting down the PC.



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# Things you can do while running your business



At personal level



## Eco-friendly commute

- Encourage a ride-to-work lifestyle to reduce own carbon emissions and avoid being congested in traffic.
- Promote car sharing among colleagues that will help limit emissions and also build stronger relationships.
- Inform colleagues on adopting eco-friendly driving practices such as maintaining speed limits and keeping tires properly inflated.

## Water saving

- Buy a dishwasher for the office kitchen to wash any dirty dishware, cups, and mugs all together at the end of each working day.
- Install dual flush in toilets for optimal water usage.
- Turn off the taps properly to avoid water wastage.
- Install a rainwater butt to collect rainwater to water office plants and grassy areas.



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# Things you can do while running your business



At business level



## Implement energy saving

- Utilize the sunlight coming from the windows and doors of the facilities.
- Use motion-sensitive lights that turn on & off automatically.
- Cool down the workspace during summer through open windows and doors, instead of using air condition units to do so.

## Adopt the 3Rs ("Reduce, Reuse, Recycle") practice

- Create and implement a concrete waste management plan.
- Reuse or recycle materials, if possible.
- Place recycling bins within the facilities.
- Promote eco-practices among colleagues and staff.



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# Things you can do while running your business



At business level



## Sustainable product storage & shipping

- Store complete products in water and energy-conserving facility.
- Equip this facility with solar panels.
- Collaborate with a third party that offers renewable energy sources.
- Use reusable shipping boxes for packaging.
- Donate or recycle unsold products.

## Collaborate with green suppliers & partners

- Approach an energy supplier that uses renewable sources.
- Form partnerships with other eco-friendly companies for a sustainable supply of materials.
- Define a rating system to motivate your suppliers to be engaged in meaningful eco-friendly practices.
- Try to create an environmentally friendly business network.



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# Conduct an environmental impact audit

This audit aims:

- a) to assess how environmentally friendly a business is,
- b) to identify changes needed to limit the environmental damage caused by business operations.

It includes the analysis of *resource procurement*, *product development*, and *waste management*.

The audit is implemented in 3 steps:

**Step 1:** Identification of components and supplies' origin and their environmental impact before their use.

**Step 2:** Analysis of environmental impact during various business operations (manufacturing, assembly, creating) for product development, considering the energy use, equipment maintenance, customer service, and operational way.

**Step 3:** Assessment of the environmental impact after the completion of business operations considering the destination of waste, water and air quality, recycling way of products and packaging.

## Create a sustainability roadmap for your business

There are **10 steps** that your business should apply in order to follow an environmental ethical path in its operations. These are the following:



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# Things you can do to inspire



# Things you can do to inspire



At personal level



## Start a sustainability blog or vlog

Create a blog or vlog where you document your journey as a green entrepreneur, sharing detailed stories, lessons learned, and practical tips. Use this platform to highlight your successes and challenges, provide tutorials on sustainable practices, and inspire your audience with actionable advice. Regularly engaging with your audience through comments or social media can further inspire others to take steps towards sustainability.

## Host eco-workshops

Offer to lead a workshop for a youth group on easy ways to live more sustainably. You could teach them how to make DIY eco-friendly products like natural cleaners or reusable bags, or how to start a small garden at home. Use your own experiences to show how small changes can have a big impact. These workshops can empower other young people to start their own green initiatives.



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# Things you can do to inspire



At personal level



## Volunteer for environmental causes and encourage friends to join

Get involved in local environmental organizations or participate in eco-friendly events like tree planting, wildlife conservation, or community recycling drives. Share your experiences with friends and encourage them to volunteer alongside you. By showing how rewarding and impactful these activities can be, you can inspire others to take action for the environment.

## Use your voice to promote change

Speak out on environmental issues that are important to you, whether in a public forum, at your workplace or through public platforms such as local media. Write letters to your local representatives, attend environmental rallies or start petitions for greener policies in your area. By actively advocating for change, you inspire others to recognise their own power to influence positive environmental action.



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# Things you can do to inspire



At business level



## Set Ambitious Sustainability Goals

Establish clear and ambitious sustainability goals for your business, such as achieving zero waste or becoming carbon neutral.

Share these goals with your team and stakeholders to inspire collective action and demonstrate your commitment to making a positive environmental impact.

## Share Success Stories and Best Practices

Regularly showcase the success stories and best practices of your business's sustainable initiatives.

Use newsletters, social media, and internal communications to share how these actions have positively impacted the environment, motivated the team, and contributed to business success.



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The logo for RECOVER, featuring a stylized plant icon above the word "RECOVER" in a bold, sans-serif font. Below it, in smaller text, is "European Youth For A Green Recover".



# Things you can do to inspire



At business level



## Foster Innovation and Collaboration

Encourage innovation and collaboration by creating an environment where team members feel empowered to share new ideas and solutions for sustainability.

Host brainstorming sessions, workshops, and cross-departmental projects to inspire creativity and a sense of ownership over the company's sustainability journey.

## Engage with the Community

Participate in community and industry events focused on sustainability.

Share your experiences, challenges, and learnings through workshops, networking events or webinars.

By being visible and engaged, you can inspire other businesses and community members.



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# Implement Employee Recognition Programs

Establish recognition programs within your company to highlight and reward employees who excel in contributing to sustainability goals or who demonstrate innovative approaches to environmental challenges.

These programs can include awards, public acknowledgments, or even small incentives such as gift cards or extra time off. For example, you could create a “Sustainability Champion” award to honor employees who develop or implement effective green practices.

Recognizing employees not only boosts morale and motivates individuals but also sets a positive example for others. It encourages a culture of innovation and sustainability by showing that the company values and rewards contributions toward its environmental goals.

Public recognition, whether through company newsletters, meetings, or social media, also helps in reinforcing the importance of sustainability within the organization.

## Develop Partnerships with Nonprofits Organizations

Partnering with these organizations can involve co-hosting events, supporting community clean-up initiatives, or working on joint projects that align with your company's sustainability goals.

For instance, your company might sponsor a local environmental education program or participate in a tree-planting campaign.

These partnerships not only amplify your company's impact on community and environmental issues but also enhance your brand's reputation and credibility.

They provide opportunities for your employees to engage in meaningful volunteer work, fostering a sense of purpose and community involvement.

Additionally, these collaborations can open doors for networking, learning, and sharing best practices with other organizations committed to similar goals.



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