

HOW TO

REPORT AND COMMUNICATE

Created by 11th Hour Racing Team for the benefit of the wider community, the How-to Guide series is part of The Toolbox, designed to help make sustainability more accessible for organizations of varying size and industry sectors.



INTRO

“
Good communications will make sustainable development a reality.
”
UNEP, 2005

This is the phase in the cycle, now that **7. How to Assess Progress** is complete, you now get to look back at your organization's work over the previous reporting cycle with your team and stakeholders, celebrate success, share learnings, make any necessary adjustments, and then communicate the key elements of the program.

A QUICK GUIDE

It's time to look back at your organization's work over the previous reporting cycle. Celebrate success, share learnings, make adjustments, and communicate the key elements of the program.



1. WHY REPORTING IS IMPORTANT

To tell your unique story, be accountable, share progress.



2. REPORTING PRINCIPLES

Accuracy, balance, clarity, comparability, reliability, timeliness.



3. HOW TO REPORT

Know your reporting objectives and what's important to share with stakeholders.



4. WHAT TO INCLUDE

Vision, scope, issues, stakeholders, progress against targets.



5. HOW TO COMMUNICATE

Know your audience, make it relevant and engaging!

1. WHY REPORTING IS IMPORTANT

“

Sustainability reporting is a good discipline; the need to demonstrate some real results is an incentive for measuring progress and keeping records, which in turn can encourage you to improve further over the next reporting cycle.

”

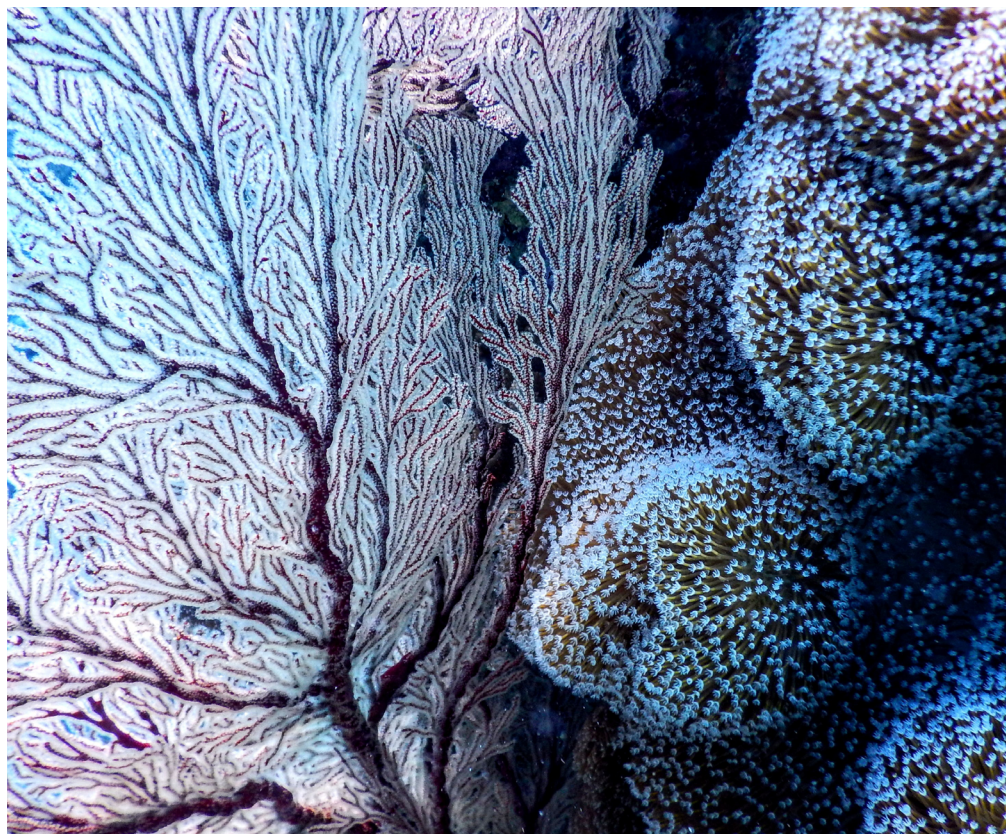
IOC ESSENTIALS



Reporting your work is an opportunity to tell your organization's unique story, to demonstrate progress, and be accountable to your stakeholders by showcasing your commitment to operating sustainably.

It is a way to organize new or existing data, from various departments within your organization and making it accessible to all concerned.

The reporting process will allow you to showcase where you stand now and your path towards achieving your objectives. The end of your reporting cycle establishes clear benchmarks for the start of the next cycle for continual improvement, which is the foundation of a credible sustainability program.



2. REPORTING PRINCIPLES



(Examples from the Global Reporting Initiative)

Reporting principles are the foundation of a good reporting process. The examples above from The Global Reporting Initiative provide reporting principles for defining content and quality, which enable stakeholders to make sounds and reasonable assessments of an organization and to take

appropriate actions.

See [3. How to Engage Stakeholders](#) to review what topics your stakeholders want to hear about (material topics), how often (reporting cycle), and in what format - for example, you could offer them a published report or a verbal update.

3. HOW TO REPORT

A good way to structure your report for context and completeness is to follow the format of your sustainability plan. By following a consistent format for each report, readers can compare across cycles to clearly see the successes, trends, and challenges.

Before starting your report make sure you know:

1. Your reporting objective (ie. to create to create and protect the value of the organization)
2. Who will need information and in what format
3. What your peers and industry sector are reporting
4. The reporting standards you intend to align with, such as GRI Standards and UN Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure comparability and credibility

5. Whether you intend to have your work peer or third party reviewed, or audited.

Your report should:

1. Provide organizational context
2. Include the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability to ensure a balanced presentation of your results
3. Demonstrate how stakeholder interests were taken into account
4. Demonstrate how material issues have been identified and addressed
5. Provide a clear, reliable, and accurate account of your organization's work to be published within a relevant timescale

3 TOP TIPS

1. REPORTING STANDARDS

You may decide as an organization, event or manufacturer to align with certain [ISO standards](#). These provide a framework for the management, implementation, and measurement of your chosen activity, and outline the importance of the reporting process and continuous commitment to sustainability and ongoing improvements.

One of the standard ways to develop a credible and comparable sustainability report is to use the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) list of disclosures, which establishes a recognised structure and global best practice for non-financial company reporting.

Refer to [Integrating the SDGs into Corporate Reporting: A Practical Guide](#) and associated case studies to learn more about how you can report to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

2. STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

Set aside a specific time and resources to discuss and critically review your report with your priority stakeholders.

The objective is to:

- ✓ Celebrate success
- ✓ Evaluate performance against objectives and targets to confirm effectiveness
- ✓ Inform changes to your sustainability plan and targets as needed

3. THIRD PARTY AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION

It is helpful to have an impartial second or third party review of your management system and reports. Whether it be by an external consultant, GRI, or industry sector peer. Make sure you define the competencies you require before you engage them.

Not only does this provide you with expert external assurance, but also helps to identify parts of your strategy which might need attention, and creates awareness for incoming legislation and general areas for improvement.

4. WHAT TO INCLUDE

Chapters to include in your report:

1. **About:** What is contained in the report, the reporting cycle
2. **Who:** Who you are and what you are doing, key operations and highlights since the last report. It should provide context of your organization and how it sits within the landscape of your industry
3. **Vision, Mission and Strategy**
4. **Stakeholders:** Describe the stakeholder engagement process
5. **Scope:** Explain the program scope (as you defined in How to: Define Issues)
6. **Materiality:** Describe how the issues were determined and prioritised and who was involved
7. **Progress against targets:** include a complete overview of the relevant targets outlined in the organization's sustainability plan, and review any regulations and what needs to be reported to demonstrate compliance

THE RESULT OF GOOD REPORTING:

Credibility is created as a result of transparently communicating your progress. It is reinforced by including opinions from informed stakeholders following recognized standards, and undertaking relevant third party audits and certifications. The result is fundamental to building trust for good stakeholder relationships.

The end goal of an organization's sustainability methodology is to drive continuous improvement from one cycle to the next. Having evaluated performance, confirmed areas of effectiveness, and decided on any changes needed, you then have the opportunity to improve. This will likely mean adjusting goals and targets, reassessing resources, and updating management systems. You may even see your organization re-evaluating the company's business model or a product offering.

The outcome is likely to be a tangible shift in individual behavior, management focus, and organizational identity.

TOP TIP

If you have used the 'How-to Guide' series to create your sustainability plan, then your report will reflect how you interpreted and implemented each of the steps in the process.



5. HOW TO COMMUNICATE

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN COMMUNICATING YOUR RESULTS:

- ✓ Keep the target audience for your report in mind and use common language.
- ✓ Keep the purpose of the reporting in mind - are you trying to share lessons learned or simply report on KPIs?

SHARE KNOWLEDGE:

- ✓ Discussing the report internally before publishing it externally is important for creating a sense of ownership within your organization and is part of the stakeholder review.
- ✓ Sharing your learnings within your industry network provides a sense of leadership and invites collaboration.
- ✓ Providing open access by publishing your report and inviting feedback demonstrates transparency and allows you to understand where your program sits within the range of issues pertinent to the global community.

GENERATE VALUE:

Good communication supports and generates marketing and business opportunities. Communicating sustainability as a core value generates tangible gains for organizations including:

- ✓ **Business value:** resilience, new market opportunities, diversification, cost avoidance, new partnerships
- ✓ **Media and marketing value:** brand value, access to new audiences
- ✓ The capacity to use your marketing insights and strategy to encourage a systemic and cultural shift in supporters and public behavior

With 64% of people choosing, switching, or boycotting brands based on their stand on societal issues (CISL, 2020), transparently publishing reports can gain considerable media and marketing value, which in turn builds trust. This enables you to reach new audiences and reinforces your values. Consumers no longer want a transactional relationship where they are communicated at, but a two way interaction with brands that bring value to their lives.



NEXT STEP

OVER TO YOU!

Across sport and business we are all innovators focused on performance and efficiency - now we need to tap into that creative potential and build capacity for sustainable solutions.

Organizations that prioritize disruptive change in “business as usual” will see the benefits within their staff and customer bases. 67% of people prefer to work for socially responsible companies (Neilson, 2014), with staff wellbeing and integration within sustainability plans leading to increased productivity and sustainable innovation (Stevens, 2013).

The adoption of sustainable practices will create economic winners, with early adopter benefits over your competitors. The sustainable product market is worth over US\$ 100 billion and growing (CISL, 2017). Now is an opportunity to show leadership, and drive authentic change. As one example, Unilever’s sustainable brands are growing at twice the rate of the rest of their portfolio.

It’s also worth noting businesses that invest and lead in sustainability are 400% more likely to be leaders in innovation, too (Makower, 2013), giving them a greater competitive edge!

At this stage in the process of implementing your program, we hope sustainability has become an integral part of your organization’s culture and mission, and that the How-to Guides have helped you along the journey. The growing benefits you are seeing will continue to inspire your organization to further regenerative innovation and progress.

For all enquiries or suggestions about this How-to Guide please get in touch at info@sustainabilitytoolbox.com. To stay up to date with the latest news on The Toolbox visit sustainabilitytoolbox.com.

If you have found The Toolbox How-To guides, templates, and supporting 11th Hour Racing Team case studies useful, we encourage you to create and share your own case studies based on your organization's experience. Please submit your documents through info@sustainabilitytoolbox.com.

Disclaimer: No warranty or guarantee of any outcome or result is made. While great care has been taken when preparing these guides, standards change over time, and applying sustainability practices is specific to each organization, sector, and jurisdiction. It is up to the user to make sound choices and determine what

RESOURCES

The Toolbox tools and templates related to this guide:

- 11th Hour Racing Team Case Study - Reporting and Communicating
- Template - Annual report & communications plan
- [The Toolbox Glossary](#)

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