

Sustainability Audit

(a useful start point)

If you want to improve your sustainability and overall ESG, begin by conducting a thorough sustainability audit to understand your current impact.

This guide will provide a framework for assessing and enhancing your sustainability practices. You could also use tools like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, which can provide an alternative approach to improving your impact.

Pre-Audit Preparation

Begin by preparing for what's about to happen as this will dramatically improve your chances of delivering it.

Define Scope and Objectives: Clearly outline the scope of your audit, including which areas of operations will be assessed. Establish objectives to guide the audit process.

Gather Documentation: Collect all relevant documents, such as energy bills, water usage records, waste management logs, and sourcing practices.

Assessment Areas

1. Energy efficiency: How could you improve the energy use of your facility?

Current Usage Analysis: Review current energy consumption patterns. Identify high-usage areas and potential inefficiencies.

Improvement Strategies:

Implement energy-efficient technologies like LED lighting, smart meters where possible. Look to heat recovery systems and more efficient distillation processes. Explore options for integrating renewable energy sources such as solar panels or biomass systems.

Key Questions:

What are the main sources of energy consumption? Are there any outdated technologies that could be upgraded?

2. Water conservation: How could you minimise use and buffer supply?

Usage Analysis: Assess current water usage in production and ancillary processes.

Conservation Techniques:

Look to implement water-saving techniques, such as rainwater harvesting, closed-loop cooling systems, and water recycling in production processes. Use water-saving fixtures and regular maintenance to prevent leaks and inefficiencies.

Key Questions:

How is water used across operations? Are there opportunities to reuse or recycle water?

3. Waste management: How could you apply the four R's?

Waste Audit: Conduct a detailed audit of waste produced, including type and volume.

Four R's Approach:

- **Reduce:** Identify ways to minimize waste generation.
- **Reuse:** Find opportunities to repurpose materials.
- **Recycle:** Enhance recycling efforts and partner with recycling firms.
- **Recover:** Consider waste-to-energy options where feasible.

Key Questions:

What types of waste are produced? Are there materials that can be diverted from landfill? Look at which have value and can generate income to offset disposal costs.

4. Sustainable Sourcing

Supplier Assessment: Evaluate current suppliers on their sustainability practices.

Sourcing Strategies:

Prioritize local, organic, and sustainable raw materials. Ensure suppliers adhere to fair labour practices. Collaborate with suppliers committed to sustainability.

Key Questions:

Are current suppliers aligned with sustainability goals? Can sourcing practices be improved to reduce environmental impact? (See other guide for more in depth framework)

Monitor, Report, and Improve

Now that you have identified areas to improve and asked some of the most pertinent questions, establish systems for continuously monitoring energy and water usage, waste production, and other key sustainability metrics. Regularly report these findings to stakeholders to maintain transparency.

Set Clear Goals and Targets:

- Based on your baseline assessment, set clear, measurable sustainability goals and targets. Use SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure these goals are effective.

What are your targets? How will you meet them and what does success look like?

Employee Engagement and Training:

- Foster a culture of sustainability within your organization by training employees on sustainable practices and encouraging them to contribute ideas for improvement.

How will you empower others around you, in what ways and how can you measure if it's working?

Certifications and Standards:

- Pursue sustainability certifications (e.g., organic certification, LEED, ISO 14001) that can help guide your practices and demonstrate your commitment to stakeholders.

Which certification are you looking to achieve, why and when do you want to achieve it by?

Collaborate and Share Best Practices:

- Engage with other distilleries, industry groups, and sustainability organizations to share knowledge and best practices. Collaboration can lead to innovative solutions and collective progress.

How are you going to engage with others, how much time are you going to set aside for it and what does success look like?

Review and Adjust:

- Sustainability is an ongoing process. Regularly review your progress towards your goals, and be prepared to adjust your strategies as needed. Celebrate successes and learn from challenges.