

How to collect **data** and use it.

The UK government is asking everyone who runs a business to consider ways in which they can help tackle climate change. Reducing the amount of energy that a business uses leads to a lower carbon footprint with less carbon emissions. This will help the government to achieve its goal of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Taking responsibility for your carbon footprint is a journey built on data: before any change can happen, you must know what to measure, where to find it and how to use the results.

Why you should consider an environmental audit

- An environmental audit requires you to reflect in detail on the way your business operates so you can identify opportunities for growth and improvement.
- It'll force you to ask and answer important questions that wouldn't otherwise be raised: are you up to speed with best practices for sustainability? If you are, which ones have you implemented? And what's stopping you from going further?
- As there's no one-size-fits-all approach to sustainability, an audit will help you identify areas of opportunity for your business: beneficial actions that are logistically, operationally and financially feasible.
- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, auditing sets you up for change; you'll gain the knowledge needed to benchmark your business against itself and its industry and learn how to measure and monitor progress going forward.

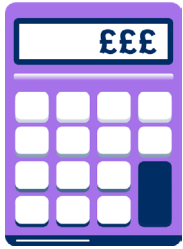


Take action

This Business Builder checklist gives you a quick snapshot of where your business is doing well, where it can improve, how to collect data and how to use it:



- 1.** Take the time to learn and inform. You, your employees and any other stakeholders must understand the need for auditing and change: from the basics – what a carbon footprint is – to the benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the level of commitment required.
- 2.** Based on what you do, consider which type of carbon footprint measurements are important. While most companies look at their entire operations for a big-picture benchmark, it's increasingly common for manufacturing businesses to work out a 'per-product' footprint. The latter might be more useful for consumers.
- 3.** Ask yourself if external help is justifiable. Larger organisations often enlist the help of specialist consultancies that assess their current impact from a neutral perspective and advise on next steps – these types of experts will know exactly what to look for.
- 4.** Set your boundaries/parameters. As its name suggests, a carbon footprint is about carbon (and other greenhouse gas) emissions, so it doesn't involve measuring your use of natural resources or the amount of waste your business generates. Keep that in mind when collecting source data.
- 5.** Identify obvious fossil fuel usage. The burning of fossil fuels – namely oil, coal and natural gas – is the primary source of human-generated carbon emissions. Start listing the different areas of your business where you know electricity and fuel are used: powering physical premises such as shops, offices and warehouses; in vehicles used to transport people and goods; for manufacturing machinery.
- 6.** Dig deeper for secondary sources. Beyond the easy-to-see lighting, computers and transport, you'll find a host of less obvious fuel-consumption sources: the servers powering your website or app, for example, or the fleet vehicles delivering products and materials from your suppliers. It's easy to see other people as being responsible for these 'secondary' sources but would the same fuel be burnt if your company didn't exist?



- ✓ 7. Do the maths. Quantify your energy use by collecting gas and electricity bills before looking at transport: the travel, in miles, that's gone into making and delivering products, and moving employees around the country (or beyond). You should be able to work back from this to determine how much fuel you use in an average week, month or year. If you're dealing in physical products, work out the quantities and weights of your output, broken down into core component materials, and put all this information into a spreadsheet.
- ✓ 8. To recap: you have gathered information (or made reasonable estimates) on your energy usage, your travel miles, your water usage, the waste you generate and the amount you have spent on other goods and services. Now you can use a carbon calculator to measure your footprint.

The Carbon Trust has this tool on its website:

<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/sme-carbon-footprint-calculator>

- ✓ 9. Once you have calculated your greenhouse gas emissions you can use this information to help you reduce your emissions and identify ways to save money.

Use your new data to identify disproportionate energy usage and mark out obvious areas for improvement: a service business operating across a large geographic area can make significant reductions by switching from in-person meetings to conference calls, for example.

- ✓ 10. Build sustainability into your business. Once you've made the easier adjustments, start building change into your long-term business plan. Consider what's possible in the future and where you want to be. Then commit to going through this process again every 12 months to chart your progress.

Additional resource

The government and other agencies have more information that is free at the point of use. This can help you understand where your company stands with regards to sustainability best practices.

A recommended starting point is the Department of Energy & Climate Change, SME Guide to Energy Efficiency: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417410/DECC_advice_guide.pdf

Another useful guide is produced by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69494/pb13310-ghg-small-business-guide.pdf