

# How to manage a sustainability scope?



## Introduction

Working in the sustainability field, particularly in the construction industry, can pose unique challenges. Numerous sustainability codes, references, and rating systems exist globally, but resources that reliably guide the practical management of a project's sustainability scope—grounded in the experiential knowledge and lessons learned from successful projects—are scarce.

Most sustainability rating systems primarily address how to design, construct and operate a green or a sustainable building. However, these systems seldom include clear, comprehensive guidance on managing a project's sustainability scope. While various documents and guidelines thoroughly cover different aspects of sustainable design parameters, the practical implementation and beneficial exploitation of these parameters are rarely recorded or collected.

The limited availability of resources related to implementation can be attributed to several factors, including the nature of the information, lack of motivation, and technical challenges.

Firstly, the nature of the information acts as a major impediment. Sustainability professionals have access to invaluable lessons and experiences of managing their projects but the sensitive nature of this information – particularly cost and financial data – prevents its widespread sharing.

The second factor is motivation. Building owners, consultants, contractors, and service providers often lack the capacity to document their project management experiences. The reason is quite simple; these hours of documentation are typically not compensated or reimbursed, and can be perceived as an inefficient allocation of time and resources once the project is complete.

Lastly, there are technical aspects to consider. The questions of what the appropriate format for documenting sustainability management experiences and lessons learned should be, which framework or methodology to use, and how to collect, archive, and share data all remain unanswered.

Managing the sustainability scope combines talent, knowledge, and accumulated experiences. To enhance the capabilities of sustainability professionals in the MENA region, it is crucial to start documenting successful experiences and organise it in a format that is easy to understand. This knowledge should be disseminated innovatively to facilitate learning and practical application for all fellow professionals. This paper has been developed to provide guidance on:

1. The significance of 'sustainability management' as a crucial element for the successful delivery of a project.
2. The challenges encountered in documenting lessons learned and successful experiences.

This paper will discuss the process of providing guidelines and instructions to ensure the application of optimal management techniques to sustainable developments, thereby securing compliance and client satisfaction.

However, it is crucial to remember that each scope is unique, and there may be instances where client expectations necessitate a slight departure from the strategy outlined here.

## Why is Sustainability Important?

Sustainability is important for many organisations, particularly those in the construction industry. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in sustainability, with many companies seeking to develop sustainable buildings and infrastructure projects. However, managing a sustainability project requires precision. In this paper, we will examine the key issues involved in managing a sustainability scope and explore ways in which challenges can be overcome.

## The Importance of Sustainability Management

Before we can discuss the challenges involved in managing the sustainability scope, it is crucial to understand why sustainability management is key, that includes the following reasons:

- **Environmental Protection:** The construction industry has a significant impact on the environment, and sustainability management can help reduce this impact.
- **Cost Savings:** Sustainable practices can often lead to cost savings in the long term, as they can reduce energy usage and other operational costs.
- **Reputation:** Sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consumers, and companies that are seen as being environmentally responsible are more likely to attract customers and investors.
- **Regulation:** Governments around the world are introducing regulations aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the construction industry. Companies that fail to comply with these regulations can face fines and other penalties.
- **Social Responsibility:** Sustainability management is an important part of a company's social responsibility efforts. Companies that are seen as being socially responsible are more likely to attract and retain talented employees.

In conclusion, managing a sustainability project is not specific to a single reason and can have multiple motivations at the same time in the recent years it has become a crucial task for companies in the construction industry due to various sustainability and net-zero targets.





In this section, we will examine various challenges faced while managing a sustainability project in more detail and explore strategies for overcoming them.

- **Nature of the information:** Confidentiality is a major challenge in managing a sustainability project, as many companies may be reluctant to share information about their sustainability practices. This is particularly true in the construction industry, where companies may view sustainability as a competitive advantage and may be unwilling to share information with their competitors.

One way to overcome the challenge of confidentiality is to create a culture of transparency and collaboration. Companies can work together to share best practices and develop new sustainability initiatives. This can help to build trust and encourage companies to share information about their sustainability practices.

Another strategy for overcoming confidentiality is to use third-party organisations to manage sustainability reporting. These organisations can provide a level of anonymity for companies, allowing them to report on their sustainability practices without revealing sensitive information. This can help to build trust and encourage companies to share information about their sustainability practices. Finally, companies can use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to protect their confidential information while still sharing information about their sustainability practices. NDAs can be used to protect financial information, trade secrets, and other sensitive data, allowing companies to share information about their sustainability practices without revealing confidential information.

In this section, we will examine each of these challenges in more detail and explore strategies for overcoming them.

- **Motivation:** Another challenge in managing a sustainability project is a lack of interest. Many companies may not see sustainability as a top priority and may be reluctant to invest time and resources into sustainability initiatives. This can be particularly challenging for small companies or those with limited budgets.

One strategy for overcoming the lack of interest in sustainability management is to demonstrate the financial benefits of sustainability. Companies can use data to show how sustainable practices can lead to cost savings in the long term. This can help to convince stakeholders that sustainability is a worthwhile investment. Companies can also use education and training to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability. This can help to build a culture of sustainability within the company and encourage employees to take an active role in sustainability initiatives.

- **Technical Aspects/Challenges:** There are many technical challenges involved in managing a sustainability project, including data collection and analysis, sustainability planning, and implementation. These challenges can be particularly challenging for small companies or those with limited technical resources. One strategy for overcoming technical challenges is to use technology to automate data collection and analysis. Companies can use software tools to collect data on energy usage, water consumption, waste production, and other sustainability metrics. This data can then be analysed to identify areas where improvements can be made. Another strategy is to use third-party organisations to provide technical support for sustainability initiatives. These organisations can provide expertise in areas such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and waste reduction, helping companies to implement sustainable practices. Finally, companies can use education and training to build technical capacity within the company. This can help to build a culture of sustainability within the company and ensure that employees have the skills needed to implement sustainable practices.
- **Regional Context and Language Barriers:** This can also be a challenge in managing a sustainability project. Different regions may have different attitudes towards sustainability and may be reluctant to adopt sustainable practices that are seen as being outside their cultural norms. One strategy for overcoming cultural barriers is to work with local communities to develop sustainable practices that are culturally appropriate.

This can help to build trust and encourage local communities to participate in sustainability initiatives. Another strategy is to use education and awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability. These campaigns can help to change attitudes towards sustainability and build support for sustainability initiatives. Finally, companies can use collaboration and partnerships to overcome cultural barriers. By working with local organisations and community groups, companies can build trust and develop sustainable practices that are culturally appropriate.

## Overcoming the Challenges

Despite the many challenges involved in managing a sustainability project, there are ways in which these challenges can be overcome. Some of the key strategies for overcoming the challenges include:

- **Education and Training:** Education and training can play a key role in overcoming the challenges of managing a sustainability project. Companies can invest in training programs to help employees understand the importance of sustainability and develop the skills needed to implement sustainable practices.
- **Collaboration:** Collaboration can also be an effective strategy for overcoming the challenges of managing a sustainability project. Companies can work together to share best practices and develop new sustainability initiatives.
- **Technology:** Technology can play a key role in overcoming the technical challenges of managing a sustainability project. Companies can use data analytics and other technologies to collect and analyse data, develop sustainability plans, and track progress. For example: IES tap, and Tracker plus are being used extensively for end-to-end management system for green certification and sustainability and social KPI metrics as well as to track progress. AI tools such as ChatGPT from Open AI is another tool that is in trial to streamline key communication and to analyse data.
- **Leadership:** Finally, leadership can play a key role in overcoming the challenges of managing a sustainability project. Leaders can lead by example by demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and providing the resources and support needed to implement sustainable practices.

In conclusion, managing a sustainability project is not easy, but it is a crucial task for companies in the construction industry. The benefits of sustainability management are numerous, including environmental protection, cost savings, reputation building, compliance with regulations, and social responsibility.

## Sustainability Metrics

To effectively manage a sustainability project, it is important to have clear and measurable/tangible sustainability metrics. Sustainability metrics are used to track progress towards sustainability goals and KPIs and to identify areas where improvements can be made. There are many sustainability metrics available, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Some common sustainability metrics include energy usage, water consumption, waste production, greenhouse gas emissions, and social impact. Choosing the right sustainability metrics depends on the specific needs and goals of the project. It is important to consider factors such as the sustainability goals of the project, the availability of data, and the resources available for data collection and analysis.

## Sustainability Reporting and Framework

To effectively manage a sustainability project, it is important to have a clear framework and reporting criteria for sustainability management. There are many sustainability management frameworks available, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Sustainability reporting is an important part of sustainability management, sustainability reporting allows companies to communicate their sustainability performance to stakeholders, including investors, customers, employees, and the wider community. One popular framework is the ISO 14001 standard, which provides a framework for environmental management. The ISO 14001 standard focuses on continuous improvement in environmental performance and requires companies to establish a formal environmental management system. Another popular framework is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, which provides a framework for green building design, construction, and operation. The LEED rating system includes a range of sustainability criteria, including energy efficiency, water efficiency, and indoor environmental quality. There are many sustainability reporting frameworks available, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Standards, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) reporting framework, and the Integrated Reporting Framework.

When preparing a sustainability report, it is important to consider factors such as the sustainability goals of the project, the target audience for the report, and the resources available for data collection and analysis. Choosing the right sustainability management reporting criteria and framework depends on the specific needs and goals of the project. It is important to consider factors such as the size and complexity of the project, the sustainability goals of the project, and the resources available for sustainability management.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, managing a sustainability project is a challenging but crucial task for organisations in the construction industry. To manage a sustainability project effectively and efficiently, companies must develop a clear framework for sustainability management, establish measurable sustainability metrics, and prepare sustainability reports to communicate their sustainability performance to stakeholders.

By effectively managing a sustainability project, companies can materialise numerous benefits, including environmental protection, cost savings, reputation building, compliance with regulations, and social responsibility. Sustainability management is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment that can contribute to long-term business success.

While there are many challenges to sustainability management, there are also many opportunities. By working together and sharing best practices, companies can overcome the challenges of sustainability management and build a sustainable future for generations to come.



# How can AESG help?

AESG is a specialist consultancy, engineering and advisory firm with offices in London, Dubai, Riyadh and Singapore working on projects throughout Europe, Asia and Middle East. We pride ourselves as industry leaders in each of the services that we offer. We have one of the largest dedicated teams with decades of cumulative experience in sustainable design, fire and life safety, façade engineering, building commissioning and digital asset management, waste management, environmental consultancy, strategy and advisory, acoustics, cost management and carbon management.



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Waleed is a sustainability consultant, advisor who possesses 19 years of extensive experience in sustainability, environmental, project management across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. He studied architectural engineering and holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in the same field and a fellowship in sustainable development from SDW in Germany. He holds numerous international professional accreditations and diverse experience in mega projects with an impressive sustainability and environmental scope, including FIFA world cup 2022 stadiums.



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Rehan is recognised as a thought leader in sustainable development and construction best practice. In his role at AESG, he has been involved in managing some of the world's most prestigious projects through design, construction, commissioning, and operation. His projects have included large prestigious master plan developments, high rise buildings, housing development and critical infrastructure. He has many years of experience within Dynamic Simulations, including Energy Modelling, Overheating, Day Lighting, Shading and Ventilation analysis and studies using appropriate software. He has also presented on climate change at the United Nations Headquarters in 2016.

***For further information relating to specialist consultancy engineering services, feel free to contact us directly via [info@aesg.com](mailto:info@aesg.com)***

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