GREENT

Green Entrepreneurship & Sustainability Manual

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR YOUNG GREEN CHANGEMAKERS

Coordinated by CINK Venturing (Spain) · Partner: Anaglyfo Consulting (Cyprus)

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NAGLYFO CINK VENTURING

How to use this manual

Welcome! This manual is for young people who want to turn a green idea — or simply a concern about the world around them — into a real, sustainable project. You don't need a business background or money to begin. You need a real problem, curiosity, and the willingness to test small and learn fast. Everything here is built for that.

What this manual helps you do

It takes you along the whole journey of a green venture: thinking like a changemaker, spotting a real opportunity, turning it into a tested concept, building and running it with practical skills, making it financially sustainable, and communicating it so it grows. You can follow it from start to finish, or jump to the stage you're in.

How it is organised

- **Five core sections** follow the journey: (1) Foundations & Green Mindset, (2) Building Ideas into Concepts, (3) Practical Green Skills & Digital Tools, (4) Finance for Green Projects, (5) Communication, Visibility & Growth.
- Then **real-life case studies** and **best practices** bring it all together.
- Every topic has the same three parts: **Theory** (the core idea), **Implementation** (a short activity you can do now), and a **Case study** (a real example, adapted). Each ends with a 💡 **Key idea**.

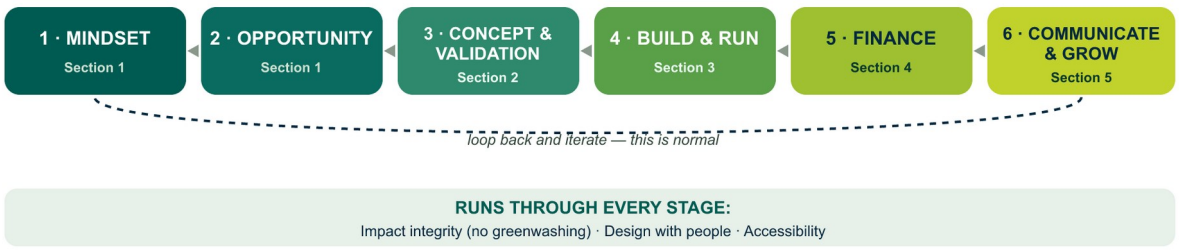
How to get the most from it

- Work with your own idea (or a problem you care about) in hand — do the activities, don't just read them.
- You don't have to read in order. Use the journey map below to find where you are and start there.
- If a topic is familiar, skip to its activity. If a word is new, check the Glossary at the end.
- Go at your own pace. Small, honest steps beat big plans.

The green entrepreneur's journey

Most green projects move through six stages. You'll loop back often — that's normal; entrepreneurship is learning, not a straight line.

- **1 · Mindset** — think like a green changemaker (→ Section 1)
- **2 · Opportunity** — find a real problem worth solving (→ Section 1)
- **3 · Concept & validation** — turn the idea into a tested concept (→ Section 2)
- **4 · Build & run** — use practical skills and tools (→ Section 3)
- **5 · Finance** — make it financially sustainable (→ Section 4)
- **6 · Communicate & grow** — reach people and scale your impact (→ Section 5)



The green entrepreneur's journey — 6 connected stages mapped to the sections (see Figures sheet).

Six principles that run through the whole manual

- Start from the problem, not the idea you love.
- Evidence over opinion — test small before you build big.
- Impact integrity — never claim more than you can show (no greenwashing).

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- Design with people, not just for them.
- Think circular — keep materials in use and design waste out.
- Do more with less — lower cost and footprint make projects last.

> 💡 You don’t need certainty to start — you need a real problem, a small experiment, and the willingness to learn fast.

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1. Entrepreneurship Foundations & Green Mindset

Before tools, models or money comes the way you think. This first section builds the foundation every green venture stands on: an entrepreneurial mindset, a clear idea of what green entrepreneurship really is, a method for designing solutions people will actually use, and the principles of the circular economy. Work through it with your own idea (or a problem you care about) in hand — each topic ends with something to do.

How to read each topic: every topic has the same three parts — **Theory** (the core idea), **Implementation** (a short activity you can do now), and a **Case study** (an example, adapted). If you already know a topic, jump to its activity.

1.1 · The Entrepreneurial Mindset for Green Changemakers

THEORY

An entrepreneur is not a person with a genius idea. It is a person who believes they can influence outcomes and who follows a simple method: turn assumptions into small experiments, and let evidence — not opinion — guide the next step. "People will pay" is an opinion; "8 of 12 people we asked said they would pay, and 3 took a concrete next step" is evidence.

Green changemakers combine that method with six traits: agency (I can act), curiosity (I understand before deciding), empathy (I design with people, not for them), experimentation (I test early), resilience (I learn from setbacks), and integrity (I don't exaggerate impact). Integrity matters most in green work: avoiding greenwashing — vague or unproven "eco" claims — is what makes your project trustworthy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Your mindset & integrity check (15 min):

- Rate yourself 1–5 on each of the six traits. Circle the two you most want to grow.
- Write a 5-line "team operating code" (e.g. "We start with the problem, not the idea we love. We talk to real people every week.").
- Take one claim about your idea and run the **green integrity check**: What exactly is greener? Compared to what baseline? What evidence do we have — or are still testing?
- Rephrase the claim honestly: "We aim to reduce…", "We are testing whether…", "Early results suggest…".

CASE STUDY

A young founder in Spain was developing a way to reuse whole glass bottles instead of melting them down. The environmental logic was strong — far less energy than recycling — but when asked about social impact, he realised he hadn't considered it. Applying an integrity and impact lens, he saw that sorting and logistics could create jobs for people at risk of exclusion, turning a purely environmental idea into one with social value too.

Takeaway for you: measure impact honestly, and look for social value alongside the environmental one — it often makes the model stronger.

> 💡 **Key idea** Start from the problem and real evidence, not the idea you love — and never claim more impact than you can show.

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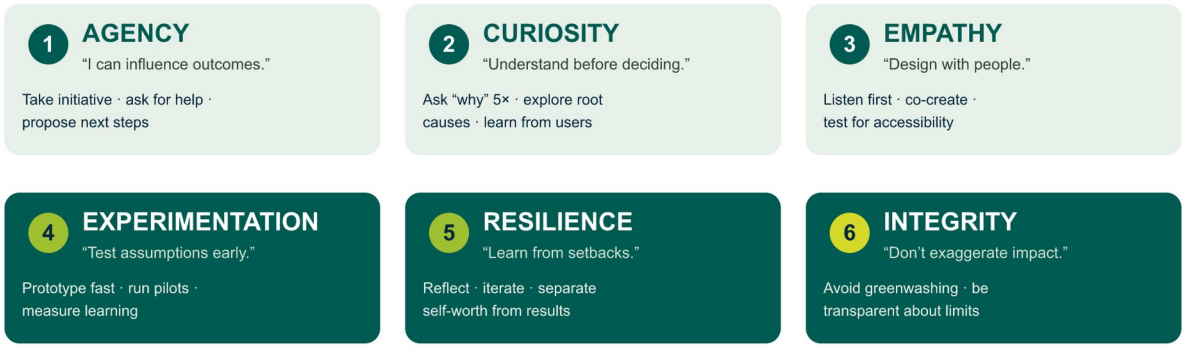

Spider/radar diagram of the 6 mindset traits for self-rating.

1.2 · What Is Green Entrepreneurship? Opportunities for Young People

THEORY

Green entrepreneurship means creating a solution that reduces environmental harm and/or regenerates natural systems, while delivering real value to people and sustaining itself through a viable model. Three quick tests keep you honest: the value test (who benefits and what problem is solved?), the viability test (how does it sustain itself — revenue, resources, partners?), and the impact test (what environmental outcome improves versus a baseline?).

It is NOT just raising awareness, "eco-labelling" a normal product without proof, one-off clean-ups, or something "green because it feels good". Real opportunities tend to come from three places: waste and inefficiency (lost value — food, textiles, packaging, water, idle assets), behaviour and access gaps (people want to do better but lack convenience, knowledge or infrastructure), and transitions and compliance pressures (organisations that must meet sustainability goals).

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Score an opportunity, then write your thesis (20 min):

- Take 2–3 possible ideas. Score each 1–5 on: urgency, reachability, feasibility, viability potential, environmental impact (max 25).
- Check red flags: needs expensive tech to start, depends on "everyone changing at once", vague/unmeasurable impact, permissions you can't get, unclear differentiation.
- For your best option, write a 7-line **Opportunity Thesis**: problem (one sentence), target group, why now, proposed direction, value hypothesis, impact logic, and your first evidence plan (3 people to talk to first).

CASE STUDY

A graduate in circular engineering noticed that waste collection in her small town was inefficient: bins filled unevenly and residents were barely engaged. Instead of a vague "recycle more" campaign, she framed a concrete opportunity — smart fill-level sensors to optimise collection routes, plus a simple citizen dashboard to improve transparency and participation. The problem was visible, reachable, and testable soon — exactly what a strong opportunity looks like.

Takeaway for you: the best opportunities come from visible waste or an access gap you can reach and pilot within months.

> 💡 **Key idea** A real green opportunity solves a proven problem, can be tested soon, and has a path to sustain itself.

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1.3 · Design Thinking for Sustainable Solutions

THEORY

Design thinking protects you from the most common start-up failure: building something nobody adopts. It is a five-step loop — empathise (learn the real context), define (frame the right problem), ideate (generate options), prototype (make it tangible), test (learn and iterate) — that keeps you close to real people and real behaviour rather than "ideal" behaviour you imagine.

For green solutions, add three checks throughout: an environmental check (what materials, energy, transport and waste are involved?), an equity & access check (who benefits, who might be excluded or harmed?), and a system check (are we just shifting the problem somewhere else?). These prevent good intentions from causing rebound effects or greenwashing by assumption.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Run one design-thinking loop (30 min):

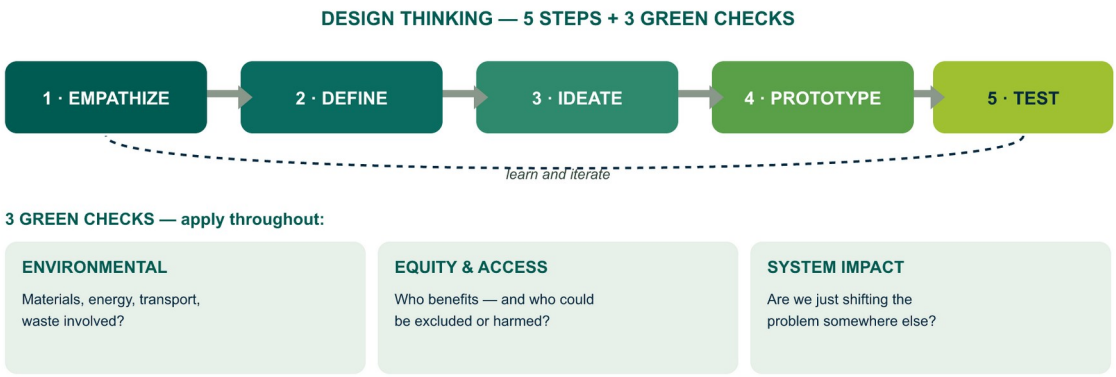
- Map your stakeholders: users, payers/decision-makers, influencers/partners, and the environment.
- Interview 2–3 people with past-behaviour questions: "Walk me through the last time you…", "What's hardest about…?", "What do you do instead today?"
- Write a problem statement with this formula: *"(user) needs a way to (job) because (insight), within (constraints), while improving (environmental outcome)."*
- Make a low-waste prototype (a 6-step storyboard, a paper mock-up, or a "Wizard of Oz" manual simulation) and test it with a pre-set threshold: "If we don't see X, we change Y."

CASE STUDY

An intergenerational community lab set out to strengthen the identity of a village facing depopulation. Rather than deciding the answer first, participants mapped what mattered — monuments, customs, trades, changes and festivals — and co-created the solution together: a short documentary. By empathising and defining before ideating, they built something the community actually recognised as its own.

Takeaway for you: design with the people affected; getting the right problem beats a clever solution.

> 💡 **Key idea** Fall in love with the problem, not the first solution — and design with the people affected, not just for them.



The 5-step design-thinking loop with the 3 green checks around it.

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1.4 · Circular Economy Principles & Real-Life Youth Examples

THEORY

The economy we inherited is linear: take, make, waste — value is destroyed at the end. A circular economy designs that waste out: it keeps products and materials in use at their highest value for as long as possible, and regenerates natural systems where it can (compost, soil health, biodiversity). Its three core principles are: design out waste and pollution, keep materials in use, and regenerate nature.

This is not only good ethics — it is good business. Circular solutions cut costs, secure materials, create local jobs and services, and meet fast-growing sustainability expectations. A useful tool is the circularity ladder: refuse/rethink → reduce → reuse/refill → repair → refurbish/remanufacture → repurpose/upcycle → recycle → recover energy. The higher you climb, the greater the impact — and usually the better the economics.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Climb the ladder (15 min):

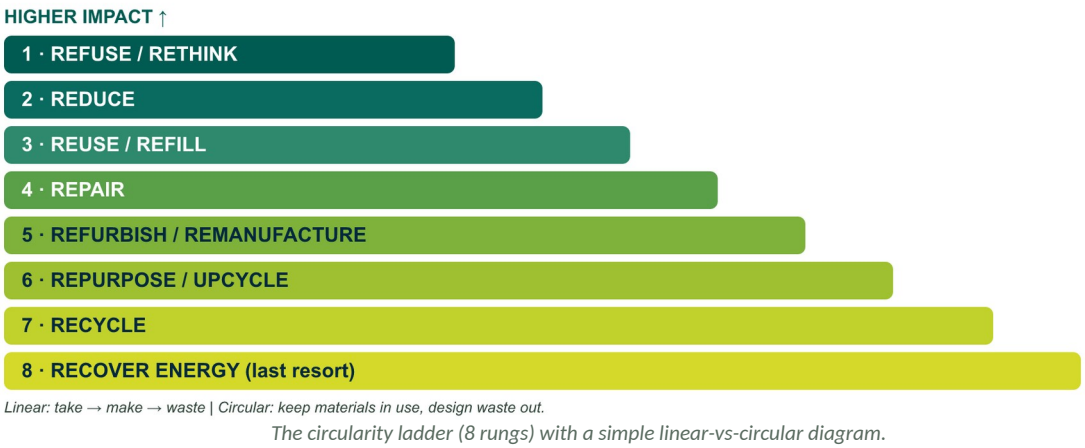
- Place your idea on the circularity ladder. Can you move it one rung higher (e.g. from recycle to reuse)?
- Name the design requirement that rung needs: reuse/refill needs convenient reverse logistics; repair needs spare parts, skills and trust; recycling needs clean sorting and stable buyers.
- Link your idea to the Sustainable Development Goals it serves — most circular ventures touch SDG 9 (industry & innovation), 11 (sustainable cities) and 12 (responsible consumption & production).

CASE STUDY

Three youth-led models show the ladder in action: a repair pop-up / repair club (strategy: repair; income from service fees, sponsorship and school partnerships; metric: items repaired and life extended); a food-waste prevention and redistribution pilot (reduce + repurpose; logistics fee and sponsors; metric: kg of waste avoided); and a responsible textile-upcycling micro-brand (repurpose/upcycle; product sales and custom orders; metric: textiles diverted and durability). One founder, for example, makes biodegradable bio-porcelain jewellery produced together with vulnerable community groups — climbing the ladder and creating social value at once.

Takeaway for you: moving one rung up the ladder often lowers costs and creates local jobs.

> 💡 **Key idea** The higher you climb the circularity ladder — refuse, reduce, reuse, repair before recycle — the greater the impact, and usually the better the economics.



The circularity ladder (8 rungs) with a simple linear-vs-circular diagram.

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2. Building Sustainable Ideas Into Concepts

You have the mindset and a promising opportunity. Now turn that idea into a concept you can actually test — without wasting time, money or materials. This section shows you how to validate lean, design a green business model, build a minimum viable test, and discover the real needs of your community and environment.

2.1 · Lean Startup for Sustainable Innovation

THEORY

You don't start with certainty — you start with assumptions. The Lean approach reduces risk by testing your riskiest assumptions first, using the smallest ethical experiments. Building too much too early wastes time, money and materials, and can even create unnecessary footprint. So instead of executing a fixed plan, you discover a working model, replacing assumptions with evidence as you go.

Green Lean adds one crucial layer: impact integrity. You must prove the environmental benefit against a baseline, not just prove that people want it — and watch for problem-shifting (solving one issue while creating another). A simple way to organise this is the Green Lean Hypothesis Stack, four things you must test: desirability (will people adopt?), feasibility (can we deliver it reliably?), viability (can it sustain itself?), and impact integrity (does it measurably reduce harm?).

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your hypothesis stack + thresholds (25 min):

- Write one hypothesis for each of the four types (desirability, feasibility, viability, impact integrity).
- For each, name its likely failure mode (e.g. "interest but no repeat behaviour").
- Pick the riskiest one to test first.
- Set your success thresholds before testing: adoption %, retention %, contamination/quality %, cost per cycle, impact proxy per week.
- Agree the decision rule: proceed if thresholds are met, pivot if you hit friction, stop if there's no credible path.

CASE STUDY

A student team assumed "students will return reusable containers if returning takes under two minutes." Interest in surveys was high — but the first pilot showed people didn't come back a second time (a classic desirability failure: interest ≠ behaviour). They simplified the return to a single step at a place students already passed, and repeat use rose above their 50% threshold.

Takeaway for you: test the riskiest behaviour early, and set your success threshold before you run the experiment.

> 💡 **Key idea** Test your riskiest assumption first, with the smallest honest experiment — and define what success looks like before you start.

2.2 · Eco-Friendly Business Models (Green Business Model Canvas)

THEORY

A product is what you build; a business model is how it works in the real world. In green ventures the "system" is often the real solution: collection, returns, cleaning, maintenance, storage, logistics and permissions. If the model doesn't run repeatedly, the impact doesn't exist. So design the operations, not

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just the product.

Your green value proposition has three layers, and all must be true: functional value (what problem you solve, what's faster/cheaper/easier), emotional & social value (trust, pride, belonging, fairness), and environmental value (what exactly improves, versus what baseline, and why). "Eco-friendly" is not a proposition; "reduces single-use packaging by X per week versus current buying" is. The Green Business Model Canvas keeps the classic nine blocks and adds four upgrades: an impact-integrity box, a circular-loop design, footprint drivers, and quality & safety.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Fill a one-page Green BMC (30 min):

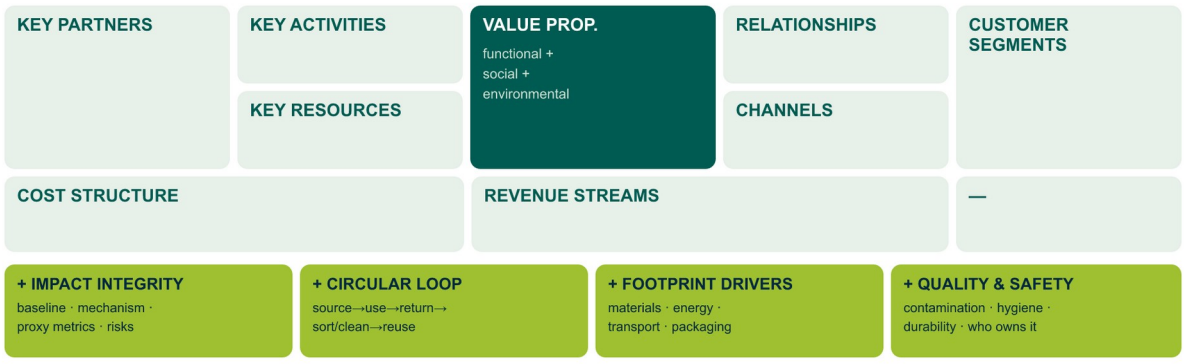
- Sketch the nine classic blocks (segments, value proposition, channels, relationships, revenue, costs, activities, resources, partners).
- Write your three-layer value proposition (functional + social + environmental with a baseline).
- Add the four green upgrades: impact integrity, circular loop, footprint drivers, quality & safety.
- Check the switching logic — people change only when value minus friction beats their current habit.
- Replace every vague claim with a specific, baselined one.

CASE STUDY

A refill service at a school offers convenient refills (functional), a sense of pride and belonging (social), and less single-use plastic than buying bottled water (environmental, vs a clear baseline). But it only works with reverse logistics: return points, a cleaning routine and a named person responsible. The idea is simple; the model is the operations behind it.

Takeaway for you: design the operations and reverse logistics, not only the product.

> 💡 **Key idea** If the system can't run repeatedly, the impact doesn't exist — design the model, not just the product.



Green Business Model Canvas (with the 4 green upgrades highlighted).

2.3 · Developing a Green MVP or Prototype

THEORY

An MVP (Minimum Viable Product) is not a small version of your final product. It is the smallest thing that generates evidence to validate — or kill — your biggest assumption. So start with your riskiest assumption: the thing that could make the idea fail even if everything else works. In green ventures the usual "killer risks" are retention (people won't repeat the behaviour), a convenience gap, reverse-logistics cost, contamination that ruins reuse, a gatekeeper saying no, or an impact claim that doesn't

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hold against a baseline.

Choose your prototype by what you're testing: for desirability, use fake-door tests or commitment tests (a deposit, a booked slot); for feasibility, a concierge or "Wizard-of-Oz" micro-pilot; for viability, a real price or partner test; for impact integrity, a baseline plus a proxy-measurement plan. The rules: low footprint first, one risk at a time, behaviour over opinions, timebox in days, stay ethical and safe, no greenwashing language, and set thresholds before you start.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Design your MVP (20 min):

- Name your single biggest "killer risk".
- Pick the prototype type that matches it (desirability / feasibility / viability / impact).
- Write the learning question and the success threshold ("if below X, we change Y").
- Keep it low-footprint: prefer a digital or service simulation before building anything physical.
- Timebox it to days, and note consent and safety.

CASE STUDY

A food-waste redistribution team resisted building an app. Instead they ran a one-day, one-partner "concierge" pilot by hand, timing each step — collect, sort, clean, deliver. The bottleneck turned out to be sorting quality, not delivery. A single day of manual testing revealed the real constraint for almost no cost.

Takeaway for you: a one-day manual pilot can expose the real constraint before you build anything.

> 💡 **Key idea** Build the smallest thing that gives evidence about your biggest risk — and remember that behaviour, not compliments, is the evidence.

2.4 · Understanding Community & Environmental Needs (Green Customer Discovery)

THEORY

Discovery is how you stop guessing. It replaces assumptions with evidence about people, systems and impact, answering four questions: is the problem real and important? who experiences it most (and who decides)? what stops action today? and what would create both adoption and real impact? It is not pitching your solution, not asking "would you use this?", and not collecting compliments. Evidence is behaviour, not enthusiasm.

In green initiatives the "customer" is rarely the only stakeholder, so map the ecosystem before you interview: users, non-users affected (neighbours, vulnerable groups), decision-makers and payers, gatekeepers who can block you, implementers who do the work, partners who provide space or transport, and the environment itself. Prioritise the people with high power and high interest, and address potential blockers early.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Run 3 discovery interviews (15–20 min each):

- Follow the flow: context → recent behaviour ("tell me about the last time you…") → pain and triggers → constraints → decision-making and trust → a gentle commitment test ("if we ran a pilot next week, would you sign up?").

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- Capture short notes and direct quotes; separate facts from your interpretations.
- Find patterns: “we heard X from Y people, especially when Z.”
- Turn them into insights: “this suggests… therefore our solution must…”
- Decide: keep what evidence supports, change what it challenges, pivot if the core assumption fails.

CASE STUDY

Before building anything, a team working on neighbourhood recycling interviewed residents and a facility manager — a gatekeeper. They discovered the real barrier wasn’t awareness but inconvenient drop-off points and distrust of the service. That insight reshaped the whole concept around convenience and transparency, long before any money was spent.

Takeaway for you: talk to gatekeepers early — they can block or unlock your pilot.

💡 **Key idea** Evidence is behaviour, not enthusiasm — and in green projects, map every stakeholder before you interview.



Evidence Ladder (opinion → interview → observed → commitment → pilot data).

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3. Practical Green Skills & Digital Tools

Good ideas need practical skills to become real. This section gives you a lightweight way to run your project (Agile), no-code tools to test fast and cheap, eco-efficiency to do more with less, and digital tools to promote your initiative responsibly.

3.1 · Agile & Scrum for Green Projects

THEORY

Green projects are complex: you don't know what will work until you test, behaviour change is hard, there are many stakeholders, and real-world constraints (time, budget, permissions, logistics) get in the way. Agile helps you move from intention to impact by delivering value in small, testable steps and creating fast learning loops: plan → do → learn → improve. It's a mindset — focus on outcomes not just tasks, work in small increments, test early, adapt on evidence, and reflect every cycle.

Scrum is a simple way to run this in short cycles called sprints (1–2 weeks). You choose a Sprint Goal, pick a small set of work, check in briefly each day or session, show what you built or learned (review), and improve how you work (retro). Keep three practical roles: Product Owner (guards value and impact integrity), Scrum Master (keeps flow, removes blockers), and Delivery Team (builds, tests, captures evidence). "Done" means usable, tested and ready to show — including the impact check.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Plan a two-week sprint (20 min):

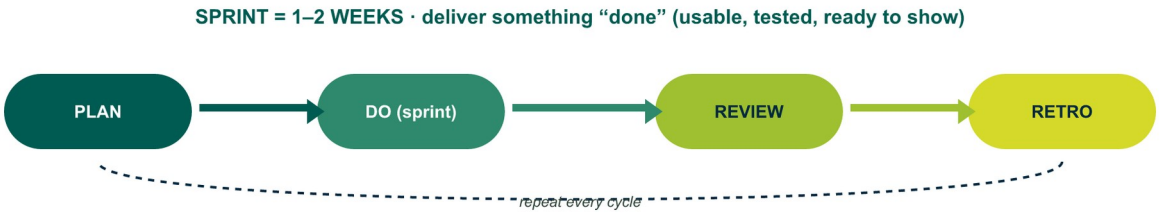
- Write one Sprint Goal in a single sentence.
- Pick 5–8 backlog items that serve that goal; give each an owner.
- Define "Done", including a quick impact check.
- Set up a simple task board: To Do / Doing / Done, with the goal pinned on top.
- Hold a 10-minute check-in each session (did / next / blockers), and end with a review + retro.

CASE STUDY

A small volunteer team kept drifting — lots of activity, little progress. They switched to one-week sprints with a single goal and a shared board. In the daily ten-minute check-in, someone flagged a missing permission early; the Scrum Master cleared it before it stalled the pilot. Momentum returned because everyone focused on one goal at a time.

Takeaway for you: one goal per sprint plus a short daily check keeps momentum and surfaces blockers early.

> 💡 **Key idea** We learn our way to a solution rather than planning our way to certainty — deliver something usable every cycle.



Sprint Loop (plan → do → review → retro, repeated every cycle).

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3.2 · No-code for Sustainable Initiatives

THEORY

No-code lets you build websites, forms, databases, automations and simple apps using visual tools — no programming needed. For green teams this means speed (test ideas in days, not months), low cost (validate before spending on materials), access (anyone can build), and a lower footprint (fewer physical prototypes when you can test digitally).

Aim for a "digital minimum": the smallest stack that can run a pilot — one landing page (clear offer + call to action), one form (sign-up plus two or three learning questions), one tracker (a spreadsheet as a mini-CRM), and one communication channel. Remember a landing page is a conversion tool, not a brochure: headline (the outcome in plain words) → who it's for and the problem → your offer → how it works in three steps → proof → one single call to action → a short FAQ that removes fears.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your digital minimum (30 min):

- Decide the next hypothesis you want to test.
- Write a landing page with the seven-part conversion structure and just ONE call to action.
- Create a short, behaviour-based form (with a consent and privacy note).
- Set up a mini-CRM: name, segment, source, status, next action, owner.
- Choose one comms channel. If you can't run a pilot with this, the idea isn't ready to scale.

CASE STUDY

A refill initiative wanted to know if demand was real before buying equipment. They published a one-page "fake-door" site with a single "book a refill slot" button and a short form. The conversion and sign-up rates gave them honest evidence of interest — for the cost of an afternoon, not a budget.

Takeaway for you: a landing page plus a sign-up can prove demand before you spend on materials.

> 💡 **Key idea** If you can't run a pilot with your digital minimum, your idea isn't ready to scale.

3.3 · Resource Management & Eco-Efficiency for Beginners

THEORY

Eco-efficiency means delivering value with fewer resources and less waste — doing more good with less input: less material, less energy, fewer transport kilometres, less wasted time, less waste created. It's not "doing nothing"; it's smart design — reduce, simplify, standardise, improve. And it pays off: lower costs make a project easier to sustain, simpler operations make it easier for people to join, and both build credibility with partners.

A useful lens is the seven wastes: overproduction, waiting, transport, over-processing, inventory, motion, and defects. In green projects, waste usually hides in logistics, coordination and behaviour friction. Alongside this, measure a baseline — what happens today, without your initiative — because you can't claim improvement unless you compare against something. Keep it lightweight: a rough week-0 count, and always record how you measured so it stays honest.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Cut waste and set a baseline (20 min):

- List your project's steps and spot which of the seven wastes appear.

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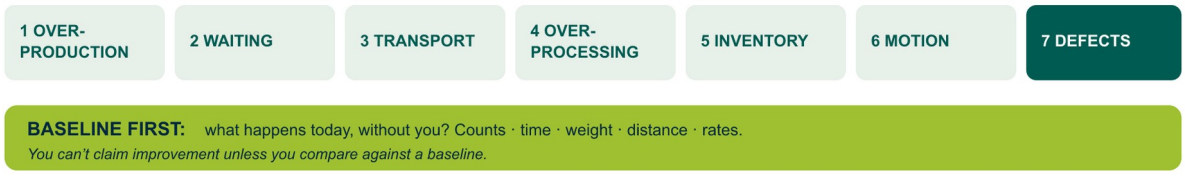
- Remove or simplify one of them.
- Take a rough week-0 baseline for one metric you can genuinely track (a count, time, weight, distance or rate).
- Record how you measured it.
- Do a 15-minute resource plan: time, people, money — and what you can borrow, reuse or get in-kind.

CASE STUDY

A collection initiative mapped its route and found several avoidable trips — transport waste. By consolidating pick-ups, it cut kilometres and fuel cost, and because it had recorded a kilometre baseline, it could show a real, credible reduction to its partners.

Takeaway for you: small logistics fixes often deliver the biggest, most provable savings.

> 💡 **Key idea** Do more good with less input — and always measure a baseline, or you can't prove improvement.



The 7 Wastes (with the "baseline first" reminder).

3.4 · Digital Tools to Promote Green Initiatives (AI, Mapping, Canva)

THEORY

Promotion is a system, not a post. It's a chain: message (what do we want people to believe or understand?) → channel (where do they actually pay attention?) → action (the one thing we want them to do now). Define your audience precisely — who they are, what they care about, and what blocks them — and drive a single clear action.

Used responsibly, digital tools multiply your reach. AI can draft and improve captions, shorten text, translate (with human review), summarise notes (without personal identifiers) and A/B-test headlines — but you stay accountable: never invent impact numbers, process personal data without consent, or publish misleading before/after results. Mapping turns community problems into organised action (refill/repair points, hotspots, routes) — but be careful with sensitive locations. And Canva is your rapid content engine: set a simple brand kit and template pack, design mobile-first and high-contrast, and add alt-text so content is accessible.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build a promotion mini-plan + content kit (25 min):

- Define your audience precisely (who, what they care about, what blocks them).
- Write one message and one action.
- Pick the single channel where that audience actually is.
- Draft three caption options (AI can help — then fact-check every claim).
- Set a small Canva template pack (post, carousel, story, event flyer + QR), and apply the integrity rule to every claim: "we are testing…", "early results suggest…".

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CASE STUDY

A repair club drove real sign-ups with a single-action campaign: “bring one broken item to Saturday’s repair pop-up.” A Canva flyer carried a QR code to a booking form, and a map pin showed the venue. One audience, one message, one action — far more effective than scattered posts.

Takeaway for you: one audience + one message + one action beats scattered posting.

> 💡 **Key idea** Promotion is a system — one audience, one message, one action — and every claim stays honest.

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4. Finance for Green Projects

A green idea needs more than good intentions to survive. It needs enough resources to test, operate and grow — and a clear understanding of where the money goes, where it comes from, and what value you create in return. This section gives you the financial basics you need to make informed decisions, understand sustainable value and costs, set realistic prices, and find funding that fits your stage and mission.

4.1 · Financial Basics for Green Initiatives

THEORY

Every green initiative needs resources. Even a volunteer project has costs: materials, transport, equipment, digital tools, insurance, meeting space and — importantly — people's time. The first financial question is therefore not "How much money can we raise?" but "What does it actually cost to make our solution work?"

Start by separating fixed costs from variable costs. Fixed costs stay relatively stable whether you serve one person or one hundred — for example website hosting, insurance, software subscriptions, storage or basic equipment. Variable costs grow with activity: packaging, transport, materials, transaction fees, cleaning, repair components or the cost of delivering each service.

Then identify the resources coming in. Revenue may come from sales, service fees, subscriptions, memberships, training or contracts. Young green initiatives may also use grants, sponsorship, donations or in-kind contributions. Remember: revenue is not profit. A simple starting equation is Revenue – Costs = Surplus or Loss. A surplus gives you room to replace equipment, pay people fairly, survive difficult months and reinvest in impact.

Cash flow matters too. A project can be viable on paper and still run out of money if expenses are due before income arrives. Track both how much money moves and when. Finally, check that your financial choices support your environmental mission: a cheap material that creates excessive waste may lower today's cost while weakening your impact and long-term model.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your one-page financial snapshot (25 min):

- List the costs needed to run your initiative for one month. Separate fixed and variable costs.
- Estimate how many products, services, memberships or activities you expect to deliver during that month.
- List every expected income or resource source: sales, fees, grants, sponsorship, donations and in-kind support.
- Calculate your simple monthly result: total income – total costs.
- Mark when the main payments enter and leave your account. Is there a period when you might run short of cash?
- Choose the three numbers you will track every month — for example revenue, cost per unit and available cash.

CASE STUDY

A youth-led repair initiative initially believed its workshops were almost free because volunteers provided the repair skills. When the team listed the real costs, they discovered hidden items: replacement components, tools, insurance, venue costs, transport and promotion. They created a simple monthly budget. A small participation fee covered consumables, a local business sponsored part of the equipment, and the community centre provided the venue in-kind. The workshop remained affordable

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while the initiative became far more predictable financially.

Takeaway for you: count the resources you actually use — including those currently donated or provided for free. Understanding the true cost makes your initiative stronger, not less social.

> 💡 **Key idea** Know what comes in, what goes out and when — financial clarity gives your green idea room to survive and grow.

4.2 · Understanding Sustainable Value & Cost Structures

THEORY

The cheapest option is not always the one that creates the most value. A green initiative can create several kinds of value at the same time: functional value (what practical problem you solve), financial value (costs saved or income created), environmental value (waste, emissions, water or materials reduced), and social value (skills, employment, inclusion, health or stronger communities).

Value must be compared with the full cost of delivering it. Your cost structure includes the resources needed to make the model work repeatedly. In green ventures this may include collection, returns, sorting, cleaning, repairs, traceability, environmental monitoring, certification or responsible sourcing — activities that are easy to overlook at the idea stage.

Think in terms of total cost rather than purchase price. A reusable product may cost more upfront than a disposable one but become cheaper over many uses. A repair service may avoid the cost and footprint of replacing an entire item. A simple life-cycle cost lens is: purchase + operation + maintenance + transport + end-of-life costs – residual or reuse value.

You do not need a complex life-cycle assessment to begin. Start with the costs and benefits you can observe, compare them with a baseline, and improve the calculation as your evidence grows. Keep the same integrity rule used throughout this manual: if an environmental or social benefit is not yet measured, describe it as something you are testing — not as a proven result.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Map your sustainable value and true costs (25 min):

- Write the value your initiative creates under four headings: functional, financial, environmental and social.
- Map the journey needed to deliver it: source → make → transport → use → return/repair → end of life.
- Add the main cost beside every stage, including hidden activities such as cleaning, sorting, administration and volunteer time.
- Choose one current alternative as your baseline. What does that alternative cost financially and environmentally?
- Identify one place where better environmental design could also reduce cost — for example fewer transport trips, less packaging or longer product life.
- Mark every impact claim as measured, estimated or still to be tested.

CASE STUDY

A student team wanted to replace single-use event cups with reusable ones. At first, the reusable cups appeared more expensive because the team compared only purchase prices. Once they mapped the full system, the picture changed. Reuse required collection, washing and storage, but each cup could serve

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many events, while the disposable model required continuous repurchasing and generated waste every time. The team calculated how many reuse cycles were needed before the reusable system became financially attractive, then focused on reducing cup loss and simplifying returns.

Takeaway for you: green value becomes stronger when environmental improvement and good economics reinforce each other.

> 💡 **Key idea** Look beyond the purchase price — design for total value across the whole life of your product or service.

4.3 · Pricing Models for Eco-Friendly Products & Services

THEORY

Pricing is one of the hardest decisions for a new entrepreneur because there is no single "correct" price. A sustainable price must help cover your costs, reflect the value people receive, and remain realistic for the audience you want to serve.

Start with your cost floor: the minimum amount needed to cover the direct cost of delivering one unit or service. But cost alone does not determine price. Customers pay for value. A repair service may save someone from replacing a €200 item; a refill service may combine convenience with lower packaging waste; a sustainability workshop may provide skills and evidence an organisation needs.

Three simple approaches help you think clearly: cost-based pricing starts with your cost and adds a margin; value-based pricing starts with the value created for the customer; market-informed pricing looks at comparable alternatives and what people already pay. Strong pricing normally considers all three.

You can also change how people pay: one-off sales, service fees, subscriptions, memberships, pay-per-use, rental, deposit-return systems, bundles, sponsorship or cross-subsidy. Circular models can use pricing to encourage sustainable behaviour. Whatever model you choose, test real willingness to pay. A deposit, paid pilot, pre-order or booking is stronger evidence than someone saying "yes, I would buy it."

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Run a green pricing test (25 min):

- Calculate your approximate cost per unit or service.
- Identify the main value created for your customer. What cost, effort, risk or inconvenience does your solution remove?
- Find 3–5 relevant alternatives and note how they are priced.
- Design three possible prices or models: a basic option, your expected option and a higher-value option.
- Test one with a real commitment — a paid pilot, deposit, pre-order, booking or letter of intent.
- Track both conversion and feedback. If people refuse, ask why: price, value, trust, timing or friction?

CASE STUDY

A young team launched an upcycled accessories project. They initially priced products only slightly above the material cost because they believed sustainable products needed to be cheap. Sales occurred, but the model could not cover the time spent collecting, cleaning, designing and making each item. The team recalculated the true cost and tested two offers: standard items and higher-priced customised pieces

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that included the story of the recovered material. Customers valued the uniqueness and craftsmanship more than expected, giving the venture enough margin to continue without pretending handmade circular products could compete with mass-produced prices.

Takeaway for you: a sustainable price is one that customers accept and that allows your initiative to keep delivering its mission.

> 💡 **Key idea** Do not guess your price — know your costs, understand the value you create and test what people will actually pay.

4.4 · Funding Opportunities for Green Youth Projects

THEORY

Your first funding source does not have to be an investor. Different stages need different kinds of money — and sometimes the best resource is not money at all. Early green initiatives often need small amounts to test whether the idea works. Borrowing equipment, receiving free workspace, getting mentoring, securing a first customer or running a pre-sale may be more useful than raising a large amount too early.

Funding can come from bootstrapping, pre-sales and crowdfunding, grants and competitions, sponsorship and corporate partnerships, loans, or impact and business investors. Each source comes with conditions. A grant may restrict how funds are used. Crowdfunding requires communication and fulfilment. Loans create repayment obligations. Investors normally expect growth and financial return, while impact investors also expect measurable social or environmental outcomes.

So do not ask only “Where can I get money?” Ask: What do we need the money for? How much do we really need? What evidence do we already have? What type of finance fits this stage and our mission? Prepare a simple funding case: problem → solution → evidence → target group → impact → business model → team → use of funds → next milestone.

Be precise. “We need €5,000 to grow” is weak. “We need €5,000 to run three pilots, acquire reusable equipment and validate a 60% repeat-use target within four months” is much stronger. And remember: funding does not validate your idea. Evidence from real users and operations remains more important than winning a competition.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your funding ladder (30 min):

- Write your next milestone — not your final dream. What must you prove in the next 3–6 months?
- Calculate the resources required to reach that milestone.
- Split them into cash needed and resources that could be borrowed, sponsored, donated or shared.
- Match your stage with three possible funding sources — for example pre-sales, a local grant and a sponsor.
- Prepare a six-line funding case: problem, solution, evidence, impact, amount/resources needed and what milestone the support will unlock.
- Before accepting funding, check conditions, reporting requirements, repayment, ownership implications and mission fit.
-

CASE STUDY

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A youth group wanted to create a neighbourhood food-waste initiative and initially planned to apply for a large grant to buy equipment. Before doing so, they approached a local market. One retailer agreed to provide surplus food for a four-week pilot, a community organisation offered storage space, and volunteers used an existing cargo bicycle for collections. The pilot produced real data on kilograms recovered, collection time and demand. With evidence instead of assumptions, the team could later approach a funder with a clearer budget and a much stronger case.

Takeaway for you: fund the next piece of evidence, not the biggest version of your idea.

> 💡 **Key idea** Match the funding to your stage — raise only what helps you reach the next meaningful milestone.

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5. Communication, Visibility & Growth

A strong green initiative must do more than work — people need to understand it, trust it, join it and help it grow. Communication is not about making your project look greener than it is; it is about making your value clear, showing credible evidence and inviting people to take part. This section brings together leadership, pitching, outreach, impact measurement and strategic growth so you can expand without losing the integrity of your mission.

5.1 · Youth Leadership for Sustainability & Social Impact

THEORY

Leadership does not begin with a title. It begins when you take responsibility for moving something forward. Green entrepreneurship needs this kind of leadership because environmental challenges rarely have one owner or one simple solution. Progress often depends on young people, communities, businesses, public authorities, schools, NGOs and other stakeholders acting together.

Your job as a leader is not to have every answer. It is to create enough clarity, trust and momentum for people to act together. Five practices help: purpose (make the reason clear), listening (understand before asking people to change), shared ownership (give people meaningful roles), evidence-based decisions (separate facts from assumptions), and integrity (communicate achievements and limitations honestly).

Leadership also means making decisions. Projects can become stuck when everyone has an opinion and no one knows who decides. Clarify who proposes, who gives input, who decides and who carries out the action. At the same time, ask who is missing. A sustainability solution can unintentionally exclude people because of cost, location, language, disability, digital access or time.

Strong leadership creates other leaders. When people understand the purpose, have real responsibility and can see how their contribution matters, the initiative becomes less dependent on one founder and more capable of lasting.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your leadership map (20 min):

- Complete this sentence in under 15 words: “We exist to…”
- List the five most important people or stakeholder groups needed for your next milestone.
- For each one, decide: do you need them to understand, advise, approve, participate or lead?
- Choose one decision your team currently finds unclear. Assign who recommends, who gives input and who makes the final decision.
- Ask the inclusion question: Who is affected by our initiative but is not currently represented in our decisions?
- Give one team member ownership of a real outcome this week — not simply a task.

CASE STUDY

A group of young people wanted to improve recycling in their neighbourhood. Their first idea was to run an awareness campaign themselves. After speaking with residents, cleaners, the municipality and local shops, they realised leadership meant coordinating the system rather than simply delivering messages. Residents identified difficult locations, cleaners explained contamination issues, a shop provided space for information and the municipality clarified collection requirements. The youth team remained the catalyst, but the initiative became something the community helped shape and own.

Takeaway for you: leadership is not doing everything yourself — it is helping the right people contribute

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to a shared outcome.

> 💡 **Key idea** Lead with purpose, evidence and shared ownership — the strongest green initiatives create more people who can lead change.

5.2 · Green Pitching & Storytelling: Building an Impact Pitch Deck

THEORY

A pitch is not a shorter business plan. It is a clear argument for why someone should care and what you want them to do next. You may pitch to a customer, school, municipality, funder, competition jury, sponsor or potential partner. Each audience cares about different things, so the pitch should change — but your evidence should not.

A strong green pitch answers eight questions: What is the problem? Why does it matter now? What is your solution? Who is it for? What evidence do you have? What impact can you credibly show? How will the initiative sustain itself? What exactly are you asking for? Evidence can include interviews, pilots, sign-ups, sales, repeat use, partner commitments or baseline data.

Storytelling makes the message easier to remember. A useful flow is Before → Problem → Possibility → Evidence → Future → Ask. Start from a human or real-world situation, but do not invent drama. For a short deck, 8–10 slides are usually enough: problem → evidence → solution → how it works → audience/market → business model → impact → progress → team → ask.

Keep one message per slide and use numbers only when you can explain their source. Most importantly, separate achieved results from future potential. “We have avoided 2 tonnes of waste” is very different from “our model could avoid 2 tonnes if the pilot reaches its target.” That distinction protects your credibility.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your 10-slide impact pitch (30 min):

- Write your pitch first as one sentence: “We help [who] solve [problem] by [solution], creating [measurable value].”
- Build the 10-slide flow: problem, evidence, solution, how it works, audience, model, impact, progress, team, ask.
- Put only one core message on each slide.
- Highlight three pieces of evidence stronger than opinion.
- Review every sustainability claim: What is the baseline? What is measured? What is still projected?
- Finish with one specific ask and explain what that support will unlock.

CASE STUDY

A student food-waste project first pitched itself with broad statements about “saving the planet” and several slides explaining the environmental crisis. The audience understood the issue but not the venture. The team rebuilt the pitch around one concrete problem: unsold food from local businesses was being discarded while nearby organisations could use it. They showed pilot data, explained the collection process, identified the cost per collection and finished with one request: two additional businesses for a six-week expansion test. The pitch became stronger because it became more specific.

Takeaway for you: people do not need ten reasons why sustainability matters; they need to understand

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why your solution matters and what evidence supports it.

> 💡 **Key idea** A strong green pitch connects a real problem to credible evidence, a workable solution and one clear ask.

5.3 · Communicating Sustainability: Digital Marketing & Outreach

THEORY

Section 3 introduced digital tools for promoting your initiative. Now turn those tools into a communication strategy. Good sustainability communication answers three questions: Who are we trying to reach? What do they need to understand or believe? What do we want them to do next? Not everyone is your audience.

A customer may care about convenience and price. A municipality may care about local impact, feasibility and public value. A company may care about reliable delivery and sustainability targets. Volunteers may care about purpose, belonging and learning. The message can change for each audience without changing the facts.

A simple outreach journey is Reach → Engage → Act → Stay. Reach helps the right people discover you. Engage gives them useful, relevant content. Act asks for one concrete step — register, buy, visit, volunteer, donate, share or partner. Stay gives people a reason to return, recommend you or deepen their involvement. Combine proof with story: pilot results, baselined numbers, testimonials, partnerships and real activity can sit alongside stories of people, challenges and learning.

Sustainability communication has one special risk: greenwashing. Avoid broad claims such as “100% green”, “planet friendly” or “zero impact” unless you can define and support them. Specific claims are stronger. Instead of “eco-friendly delivery”, say what changed. When evidence is still developing, use language such as “we are testing…”, “our pilot aims to…” or “early data shows…”. Credibility beats hype.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build a four-week outreach plan (30 min):

- Choose one priority audience for the next four weeks.
- Define the single action you want them to take.
- Write your main message using: problem → value → proof → action.
- Choose 2–3 channels based on where this audience already pays attention — not where you prefer to post.
- Create four content types: educate, demonstrate, involve and prove.
- Track a simple funnel: people reached → people engaged → people taking action → people returning.
- Review every environmental claim and remove anything vague, exaggerated or unsupported.

CASE STUDY

A community refill project initially posted general sustainability facts several times per week. Engagement looked reasonable, but very few people used the service. The team changed its communication around one target group: people working near the refill point. Instead of generic environmental posts, it showed exactly where the service was, how long a refill took, what it cost and how many single-use containers participating customers had avoided during the pilot. Every post ended with the same action: “Bring your container this Thursday.” The communication became connected to

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real behaviour.

Takeaway for you: visibility is useful only when it moves the right people toward a meaningful action.

> 💡 **Key idea** Communicate for action, not attention — be specific about the value you create and precise about the impact you can prove.

5.4 · Growing & Sustaining Green Initiatives: Impact Measurement & Strategy

THEORY

Growth is not simply "more customers". A green initiative is ready to grow when it can create more value without losing the qualities that made it sustainable in the first place. Before scaling, ask three questions: Does it work? Can it repeat? Does the impact hold as activity increases?

This is why impact measurement matters. You do not need dozens of indicators. Start with a small chain: Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact. For example, volunteers and tools are inputs; repair workshops are activities; items repaired are outputs; products staying in use longer are outcomes; reduced material demand and waste are longer-term impacts. Do not jump directly from activity to impact. Use a baseline wherever possible: what would probably have happened without your initiative? Then build a small dashboard covering adoption (are people using it?), financial health (can the model sustain itself?), operational quality (can you deliver reliably?) and impact (is the environmental or social outcome improving?). Mark whether each impact measure is direct, a proxy or an estimate.

Growth can take different forms: deepen value for the community you already serve; expand to new customers or places; partner with organisations; replicate the model so others can use it; or digitise parts of delivery. Use stage gates: Pilot → Prove → Standardise → Grow → Review. Do not scale chaos. First understand what works and make it repeatable.

IMPLEMENTATION

Activity — Build your impact & growth dashboard (30 min):

- Write your change chain: inputs → activity → output → outcome → impact.
- Select 4–6 indicators you can genuinely measure. Include at least one adoption, financial, operational and impact metric.
- Write the baseline beside each impact indicator.
- Mark each metric as measured directly, proxy or estimated.
- Choose your next growth strategy: deepen, expand, partner, replicate or digitise.
- Set one stage gate: "We will not grow until…" followed by 2–3 measurable conditions.
- Ask: If we double our activity, what might become worse environmentally, socially or operationally?

CASE STUDY

A repair initiative became popular after several successful community events and was invited to run workshops in five additional locations. Before accepting them all, the team examined its data. Demand was strong, but the workshops depended heavily on two skilled volunteers and there was no standard system for recording repairs or checking whether repaired products remained in use. Instead of scaling immediately, they spent two months standardising the process, training new repair mentors and tracking outcomes. When they expanded, growth depended less on individual volunteers and their impact

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evidence became stronger.

Takeaway for you: growth should multiply what works, not multiply your unresolved problems.

> 💡 **Key idea** Prove it, make it repeatable, then grow it — scale the impact, not the waste or complexity.

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6. Best Practices: Green Entrepreneurship in Action

Best practices are not recipes to copy blindly. They are patterns that repeatedly make green initiatives stronger: start from a real need, test before investing, make the sustainable choice easy, understand the full cost, measure what changes and communicate only what you can support with evidence.

The examples below bring the manual together. Each model combines entrepreneurship, circular thinking, practical operations, finance, communication and impact integrity. Use them as inspiration, then adapt the logic to your own community, resources and environmental challenge.

6.1 · Refill & Reuse Systems — Make the Sustainable Choice Easy

BEST PRACTICE

A refill or reuse model works only when the return or refill behaviour is easier than the disposable alternative. The environmental idea may be simple, but the real innovation is usually the system around it: convenient access, clear instructions, reliable cleaning, deposits or incentives, storage and reverse logistics.

Strong reuse projects design for repeated behaviour from day one. They test where people already go, how long the return takes, what causes loss or contamination, and how many reuse cycles are needed before the environmental and financial case becomes credible.

The best practice is to measure both adoption and circulation. Counting how many reusable items you own tells you little; what matters is how often they are actually used, returned and kept in the loop.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Start with one location, one user group and one simple return route.
- Measure the baseline: what single-use product or behaviour are you replacing?
- Track return rate, repeat use, loss or contamination and cost per cycle.
- Remove friction before adding promotion — make the sustainable action the convenient action.
- Scale only when cleaning, storage and reverse logistics work reliably.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

A school refill pilot first focused on installing attractive containers. Early testing showed that the bigger issue was not the container itself but where people had to return it. The team moved the return point to a place students already passed every day, simplified the process to one step and tracked repeat use.

The improved model combined behaviour design with operations: convenience increased participation, while the return-rate data showed whether the circular system was actually working.

Takeaway for you: in reuse models, convenience and reverse logistics are part of the product — not an afterthought.

💡 **Key idea** Design the loop before you promote the product: refill, return, clean and repeat.

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6.2 · Repair & Life Extension — Keep Products in Use

BEST PRACTICE

Repair is one of the strongest circular strategies because it preserves the value already embedded in products. A successful repair initiative does more than fix broken items: it creates trust, skills, access to tools and a reliable process for deciding what can be repaired safely and economically.

Good practice starts with a clear scope. Decide what types of items you can handle, what skills and spare parts are needed, how safety will be managed and when an item should not be repaired. Then make learning visible: document common faults, recurring parts and the time required for each repair.

Financial sustainability can come from service fees, memberships, workshops, sponsorship, school partnerships or a blended model. The impact metric should go beyond “number of events” to the life extension achieved and the number of items that remain in use.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Define a safe repair scope and a simple intake checklist.
- Track items repaired, repair success rate, time per repair and follow-up use.
- Build a small parts-and-tools inventory around the most common needs.
- Pair experienced repairers with young learners so knowledge spreads.
- Use workshops and memberships to create both income and community ownership.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

A community repair club began as a monthly volunteer event. Demand grew quickly, but the same two volunteers handled most repairs. Instead of immediately adding more locations, the team standardised its intake process, created repair guides for common faults and trained new mentors.

The initiative then expanded with a stronger operating system and better impact evidence, because repairs were recorded and participants were asked whether the items were still in use later.

Takeaway for you: repair becomes scalable when knowledge, quality and safety are built into the model — not held by one expert.

> 💡 **Key idea** Extend product life and spread the skills that make repair possible.

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6.3 · Food Surplus Redistribution — Design Logistics Before Technology

BEST PRACTICE

Food-surplus projects often look like a technology problem, but the hardest work is usually operational: timing, food safety, sorting, storage, transport, reliable partners and matching supply with real demand. Building an app before understanding these steps can automate the wrong process.

A better approach is to run the service manually first. One retailer, one collection window and one receiving organisation can reveal the true bottleneck within days. Measure what happens at every step, then digitise only the parts that genuinely need automation.

Impact integrity also matters. “Food collected” is an output. A stronger picture includes how much was safely redistributed, what would otherwise have happened to it, the transport required and whether the process can operate repeatedly.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Run a manual micro-pilot before investing in an app or platform.
- Map each step: collect → check → sort → store → transport → hand over.
- Track kilograms offered, accepted, redistributed and rejected, plus time and kilometres.
- Set clear responsibilities for food safety, timing and communication.
- Automate only after the repeated process is understood and stable.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

A youth team planned a digital marketplace for surplus food. Their first one-day concierge pilot showed that the main constraint was not finding recipients; it was sorting quality and the narrow collection window. They redesigned the operating process before writing any technology specification.

The result was a simpler model with clearer roles, better data and a much lower risk of spending money on software that would not solve the real problem.

Takeaway for you: in operational green projects, the process is the product — understand it before you digitise it.

> 💡 **Key idea** Prove the logistics manually first; technology should remove a known bottleneck, not hide an unknown one.

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6.4 · Upcycling & Circular Products — Create Value, Not Just a “Green” Story

BEST PRACTICE

Upcycling can turn discarded materials into products of higher value, but waste alone does not create a viable business. People still need to want the product for its design, usefulness, quality or meaning. The sustainability story should strengthen the offer, not compensate for a weak one.

Good practice starts with material consistency and product quality. Test whether the waste stream is reliable, what preparation is required, how much usable material is recovered and whether production time allows a sustainable price. Then communicate the material story precisely: what was diverted, from where and how it was transformed.

Avoid claiming that an upcycled product is automatically “zero waste” or “fully sustainable”. There may still be energy, adhesives, packaging, transport and off-cuts. Honest boundaries build more trust than perfect-sounding claims.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Choose a waste stream you can source consistently and safely.
- Prototype for desirability and durability, not only for environmental appeal.
- Calculate the full cost of collection, cleaning, preparation and production time.
- Track material diverted and production yield, including unusable off-cuts.
- Tell the material story with specific evidence rather than vague green labels.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

An upcycled accessories team initially priced products close to the cost of materials. Once they counted collection, cleaning and making time, the model was not viable. They redesigned the range around fewer, higher-quality pieces and tested customised products with a clearer material story.

The higher-value offer better reflected the craftsmanship and allowed the team to keep producing without competing directly with mass-produced prices.

Takeaway for you: circular materials are a starting point; lasting customer value still comes from quality, design and a credible model.

> 💡 **Key idea** Do not sell waste with a green label — turn recovered material into something people genuinely value.

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6.5 · Community Green Initiatives — Co-design With the People Affected

BEST PRACTICE

Community initiatives work best when people are participants in the solution, not just the audience for it. Awareness alone rarely changes a system. Residents, schools, businesses, local authorities, facility managers and vulnerable groups may experience the same environmental issue differently, so the initiative needs their knowledge and ownership.

Best practice is to map the stakeholder ecosystem early, especially gatekeepers who can approve or block a pilot. Use discovery interviews and observation to understand existing behaviour. Then involve people in choosing locations, rules, communication and success measures.

Co-design also improves inclusion. Ask who could be unintentionally excluded by price, language, digital access, mobility, opening hours or location. A green solution that people cannot access will struggle to create lasting impact.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Map users, non-users affected, payers, implementers, partners and gatekeepers.
- Interview people about recent behaviour, not hypothetical intentions.
- Invite stakeholders to shape at least one real design decision.
- Check accessibility: cost, language, location, mobility, timing and digital access.
- Give the community feedback on what changed because of their input.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

A neighbourhood recycling team assumed the main problem was low awareness. Interviews with residents and a facility manager showed that inconvenient drop-off points and distrust were more important. The team changed the location and added clearer information about what happened to collected materials.

Because the solution responded to real barriers identified by the community, the pilot tested behaviour rather than simply delivering another campaign.

Takeaway for you: people support what they help shape — co-design turns participation from a communication goal into part of the operating model.

> 💡 **Key idea** Design with the community, especially the people who can be excluded or who can unlock the system.

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6.6 · Partnerships for Sustainable Growth — Scale Through Networks, Not Complexity

BEST PRACTICE

Green ventures rarely control every resource they need. Space, materials, transport, expertise, permissions, customers and funding may sit with different organisations. Partnerships can therefore be a growth strategy, not just a source of support.

Strong partnerships start with mutual value. Be clear about what each partner contributes, what they receive, who owns each task and what evidence will show that the collaboration works. A partner should reduce a real constraint — not simply add a logo to your presentation.

Before expanding to new places, standardise the parts of your model that must stay consistent and identify the parts that can adapt locally. This makes replication easier while protecting quality and impact integrity.

HOW TO APPLY

How to apply this best practice:

- Identify the three constraints most likely to limit your next stage of growth.
- For each constraint, ask whether a partner already has the resource, access or capability you need.
- Define mutual value, responsibilities, data to be shared and a review point.
- Document the core process before asking others to replicate it.
- Measure whether the partnership improves reach, cost, quality or impact — not just visibility.

EXAMPLE IN PRACTICE

A youth circular-economy initiative wanted to operate in several neighbourhoods but could not afford separate spaces and transport in each one. Instead of building everything itself, it partnered with community centres for venues and local businesses for material collection.

The team kept one common operating checklist and impact dashboard while allowing each location to adapt opening times and communication to local needs. Growth came from a network, not from a larger central operation.

Takeaway for you: the right partner can remove a bottleneck faster and with fewer resources than building the capability yourself.

💡 **Key idea** Grow by connecting existing strengths — partnerships should make the model simpler, stronger and more repeatable.

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6.7 · The Green Entrepreneur's Best-Practice Checklist

BEFORE YOU GROW

Use this checklist as a short review before you invest more money, add a new location, approach a funder or launch a larger campaign. You do not need perfect scores — you need to know where the evidence is strong and where you are still guessing.

CHECK THE BASICS

Can you answer "yes" — with evidence — to most of these?

- We are solving a specific problem that real people experience.
- We have a baseline for the environmental or social issue we want to improve.
- We tested the riskiest assumption before investing heavily.
- People have shown behaviour or commitment, not only positive opinions.
- We understand our costs, cash needs and a realistic path to financial sustainability.
- Our circular or resource-efficient operations work in practice, not only on paper.
- The people affected — including possible gatekeepers and excluded groups — have been involved.
- Our impact claims are specific, baselined and supported by evidence.
- Our communication asks the right audience to take one clear action.
- The model is repeatable enough to grow without multiplying waste, cost or confusion.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Circle the two statements above where your evidence is weakest. Turn each one into a small experiment for the next 30 days. A good next step is specific, measurable and cheap enough to learn from quickly.

Takeaway for you: best practice is not a final state — it is a habit of testing, measuring, learning and improving.

> 💡 **Key idea** Small, evidence-based improvements compound into credible green impact.

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Green glossary

Plain-language definitions of the key terms used in this manual. Terms are the same across the English, Spanish and Greek editions.

Term	Definition
Agile	A flexible way of working that delivers value in small steps and improves through fast cycles of plan–do–learn–improve.
Backlog	The prioritised list of possible work a team picks from for each sprint.
Baseline	What is happening today, before your project — the reference point you compare against to prove improvement.
Business model	How a project creates, delivers and sustains value in the real world — not just the product itself.
Business Model Canvas	A one-page template that maps the nine building blocks of a business model.
Circular economy	An economy that designs out waste, keeps materials in use, and regenerates nature — instead of "take–make–waste".
Circularity ladder	A ranking of circular strategies from highest impact (refuse, reduce, reuse, repair) to lowest (recycle, recover).
Concierge pilot	A test where you deliver the service manually, by hand, to learn how it really works before automating it.
Conversion rate	The share of people who take the action you want (e.g. sign up) out of everyone who saw your offer.
CRM	A simple system — even a spreadsheet — to manage contacts, follow-ups and progress with users and partners.
Customer / needs discovery	Talking to and observing real people to replace assumptions with evidence about their needs and behaviour.
Design thinking	A five-step way to solve problems (empathise, define, ideate, prototype, test) that keeps you close to real users.
Eco-efficiency	Delivering the same value with fewer resources and less waste — doing more good with less input.
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance — the three areas used to judge how responsible an organisation is.
Fake-door test	A test that offers something (e.g. a "sign up" button) to measure real interest before the thing actually exists.
Gatekeeper	A person who can approve or block your project — e.g. a facility manager, school leader or local council.
Green entrepreneurship	Creating a solution that reduces environmental harm or regenerates nature, delivers real value to people, and sustains itself.
Greenwashing	Making environmental claims that are vague, unproven or misleading.
Hypothesis	A clear assumption you can test — e.g. "students will return containers if it takes under two minutes".
Impact integrity	Being honest and evidence-based about your environmental impact, measured against a baseline.
Lean startup	A method that reduces risk by testing the riskiest assumptions first, with small, cheap experiments.
MVP (Minimum Viable Product)	The smallest thing you can make to get evidence that validates — or kills — your biggest assumption.
No-code	Building digital tools (sites, forms, apps, automations) with visual tools, without programming.
Pivot	Changing direction when the evidence shows your core assumption was wrong.
Prototype	An early, rough version of a solution made to learn — not to sell.

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ANAGLYFO CINK VENTURING

Term	Definition
Proxy metric	A simple, measurable stand-in for an impact that is hard to measure directly (e.g. single-use items avoided).
Rebound effect / problem shifting	When a "green" solution accidentally creates a new problem or moves harm elsewhere.
Regeneration	Actively restoring natural systems (soil, biodiversity, water) — going beyond just "doing less harm".
Reverse logistics	The steps needed to bring products or materials back (return, collect, sort, clean) so they can be reused.
Scrum	A simple framework for running Agile work in short cycles (sprints), with clear roles and events.
SDGs	The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals for people and the planet.
Sprint	A short, fixed period (1–2 weeks) in which a team delivers something usable and tested.
Stakeholder	Anyone affected by or able to influence your project: users, partners, decision-makers, community — and the environment.
Sustainability	Meeting today's needs without harming the ability of future generations and nature to meet theirs.
Upcycling	Turning waste or unwanted items into something of higher value or new use.
Value proposition	The clear reason someone chooses your solution — the value they get and why they would switch.
Wizard of Oz test	A test that looks automated to the user but is run manually behind the scenes, to learn cheaply.

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