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ЗА ЕВРОПСКИ ОБРАЗОВНИ
ПРОГРАМИ И МОБИЛНОСТ

SustainABLE
Fostering sustainable ways to work in the new digital era

ROADMAP
for sustainable work practices

CENTER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

BICC
BUSINESS INFORMATION AND CONSULTING CENTRE - SANDANSKI

РЕГИОНАЛНО ГЕОГРАФСКО ДРУШТВО
ГЕОСФЕРА
БИТОЛА

Project:
"Fostering sustainable ways to work in the new digital era"- SustainABLE

*This **Roadmap** is developed within the project "Fostering new sustainable ways to work in the new digital era" – SustainABLE, implemented by three partner organizations: Center for Climate change – Gevgelija, BICC - Sandanski and Geosfera – Bitola. The SustainABLE project is financed by the National Agency for European Educational Programes and Mobility in N. Macedonia, through the ERASMUS+ Programme by the European Union.*

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Contents

Introduction 4

What are sustainable work practices? 4

The SustainABLE project 4

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5

The SustainABLE Roadmap 6

Waste management 7

How to improve the waste management practices? 8

Energy efficiency and Renewable energy sources 9

How to improve the energy efficiency practices? 10

Resource efficiency 11

How to improve the resource efficiency practices? 12

Sustainable transportation 13

How to improve the sustainable transportation practices? 14

Remote work 15

How to improve the remote work practices? 16

Virtual or hybrid meetings and events 17

How to improve practices for virtual or hybrid meeting and events? 18

Sustainable food 19

How to improve sustainable food practices? 20

Introduction

What are sustainable work practices?

Sustainable workplace practices refer to the application of various types of measures that can be taken by NGOs and CSOs in order to reduce the carbon footprint and the negative impact on the environment, as well as to diminish the consumption of resources.

In this rapidly changing world, the importance of sustainability has become more evident than ever. One of the most significant advantages of implementing sustainable practices lies in reducing the environmental impact, minimizing their carbon footprint as well as setting a positive example for the broader community and other sectors. Beyond the immediate environmental benefits, adopting sustainable work practices provides significant advantages to NGOs, serving as a powerful source of motivation. Sustainability brings long-term financial benefits to NGOs by optimizing the use of energy and resources, resulting in significant cost savings over time. The adoption of sustainable work practices improves the image of the organization, portraying it as environmentally conscious and socially responsible, which enhances its reputation among stakeholders and partners. This positive image attracts supporters and donors who align with this kind of policy.

The SustainABLE project

The goal of the **SustainABLE project** is to influence the behavior of individuals working in small non-governmental organizations and civil associations, especially in the field of green and digital transformation, contributing directly towards reducing CO_2 emissions and improving the carbon footprint. This includes raising awareness and developing qualifications for the adoption of sustainable work practices based on key sustainability principles, such as the circular economy, sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, sustainable food and mobility, and remote work.

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The goals and project activities according to the SustainABLE project provide a basis for connecting with some of the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. According to the targets and indicators prescribed for each of the SDGs, through the implementation of this project there is an opportunity to contribute to the achievement of some of these goals, specifically encompassing the following 5 SDGs:

- 4 QUALIITY EDUCATION
- 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
- 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC WORK
- 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
- 13 CLIMATE ACTION

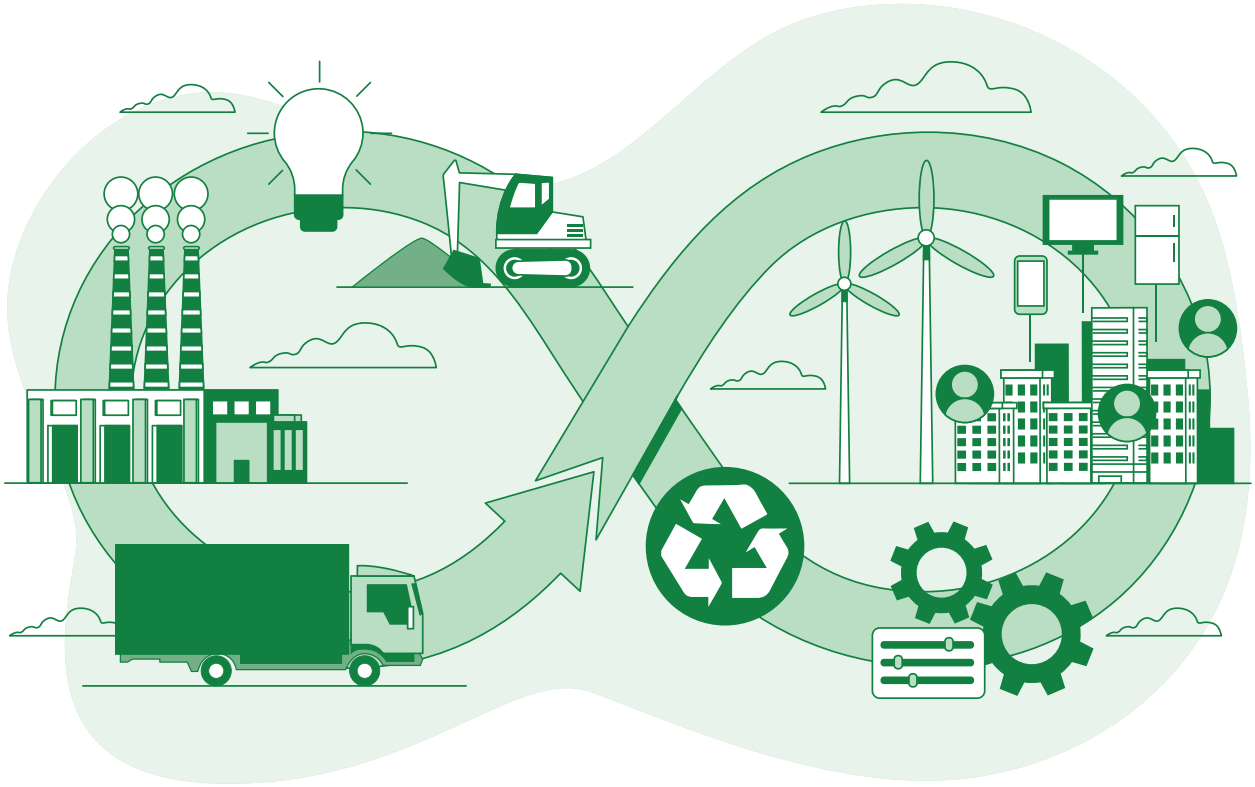
In addition, the project and the SustainABLE Roadmap aligns with the global efforts for achieving sustainability and support the EU targets for reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The SustainABLE Roadmap

The **Sustainable Roadmap** is an initiative aimed at fostering and empowering sustainability efforts across various sectors and communities and to directly involve and benefit diverse range of target groups and stakeholders. It targets representatives in NGOs and CSOs, educators, community leaders, and partnership organizations and other stakeholders that collaborate with NGOs and CSOs.

To address the specific needs and challenges faced by NGOs/CSOs, a research for assessing the readiness of these organizations in terms of sustainable practices was conducted. The results from this research serve as a basis for development of the Sustainable Roadmap and Guide. According to these research findings, it is ensured that the strategic approach and the specific measures with practical solutions included in the Roadmap and Guide are provided to empower organizations and improve the implementation of sustainable work practices, as well as to foster positive change towards environmental responsibility and long - term organizational sustainability.

The goal of the Roadmap is to provide guidance for organizations on how to integrate sustainability-related goals and strategies within the workplace. The following section of this document presents specific measures for implementation of sustainable work practices. These practices cover a spectrum of sustainability aspects, encompassing different categories, such as waste management, energy efficiency, resource efficiency/ conservation, sustainable transportation, remote work, virtual/hybrid meetings and events, and sustainable food practices. For each of these sections, you will discover actionable steps for their integration in the workplace, as well as insights regarding the anticipated time frames, associated costs, and the level of difficulty entailed in adopting these practices.



Waste management

Globally, over 2 billion tons of municipal solid waste are generated each year, and only about 16% of it is recycled, leading to extensive landfilling and environmental pollution.

Recycling one ton of paper can save around 17 trees, 7,000 gallons of water, and 380 gallons of oil, highlighting the positive impact of recycling on resource conservation.

How to improve the waste management practices?

- **Implement a waste separation and recycling program within the organization**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Moderate (bins, education materials)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee training, recycling partnerships

- **Motivate employees to minimize single-use plastics and choose reusable alternatives like water bottles and coffee cups.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy
  - Costs: Low (possibly reusable bottle/cup incentives)
  - Time Required: Short Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee education and awareness

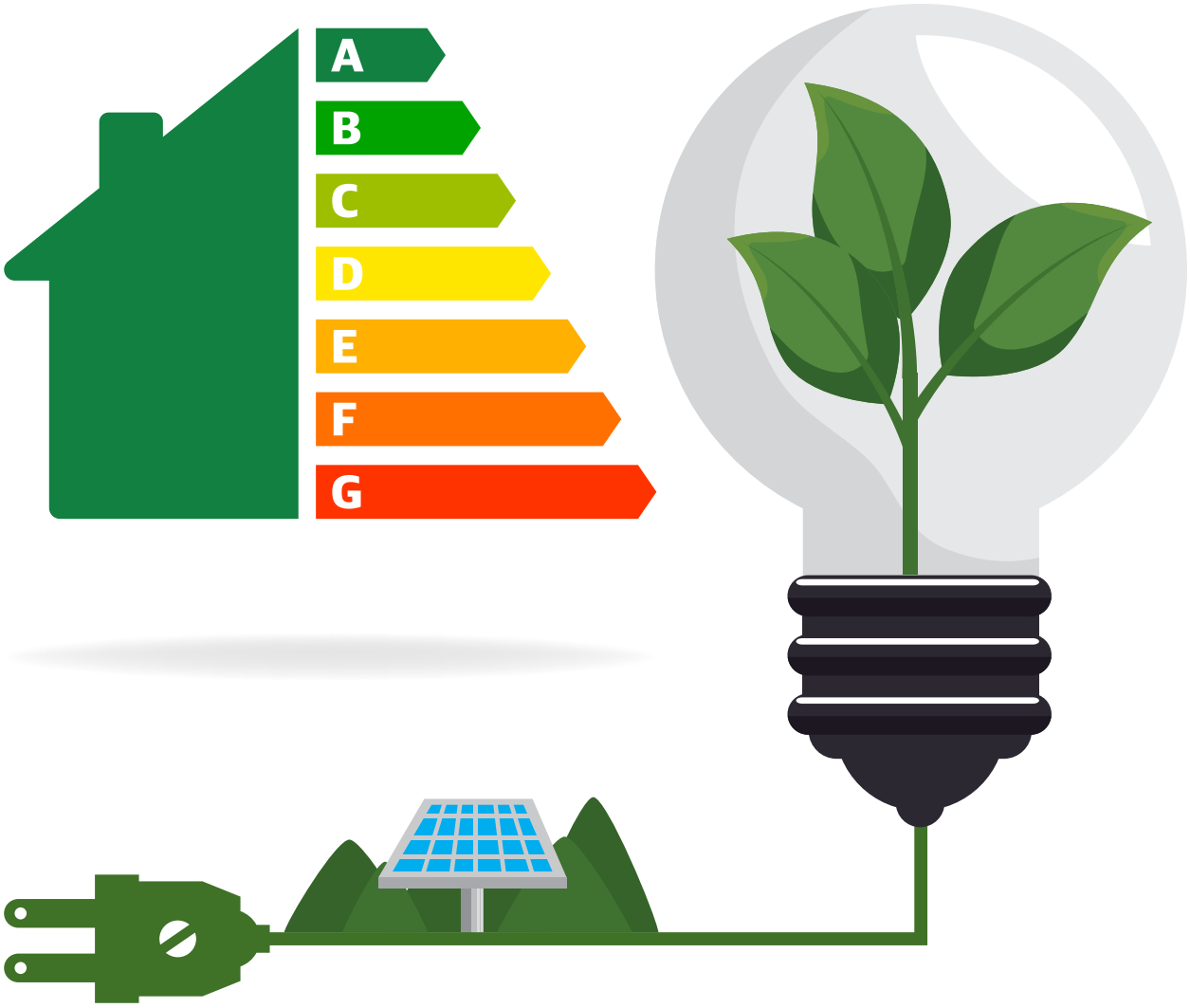
- **Partner with local recycling facilities and waste management companies to ensure proper disposal of selected waste.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (contractual agreements)
  - Time Required: Short Term
  - Other Requirements: Research on local facilities and contracts

- **Implement a composting program for organic waste generated in the office.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Moderate (composting bins, education)
  - Time Required: Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee education and composting infrastructure

Energy efficiency and Renewable energy sources

Solar energy installations have grown by over 26% annually since 2010, making solar one of the fastest-growing renewable energy sources worldwide.

LED Lighting bulbs are highly energy-efficient and can use up to 80% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs.



How to improve the energy efficiency practices?

- **Install energy-efficient lighting systems, such as LED bulbs, and motion sensors.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Moderate (lighting fixtures, sensors)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Lighting assessment
- **Invest in energy-efficient, replace the old and obsolete electronic equipment and appliances with appliances with higher energy class.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (replacement costs)
  - Time Required: Short Term
  - Other Requirements: Equipment assessment
- **Encourage employees to turn off lights and power down electronics when not in use to reduce standby power consumption.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy
  - Costs: Low (awareness campaigns)
  - Time Required: Short Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee awareness
- **Consider installing renewable energy sources like solar panels, if applicable.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult
  - Costs: High (solar panel installation)
  - Time Required: Long Term
  - Other Requirements: Site assessment, regulatory approvals

Resource efficiency

Approximately 375 million empty printer cartridges end up in landfills annually, where they can take hundreds of years to decompose, releasing harmful chemicals into the environment. Recycling toner cartridges can save up to 3.4 liters of oil and prevent harmful substances from contaminating the environment.

Many office supplies, such as pens, markers, and folders, are made from single-use plastics, contributing to plastic pollution and endangering marine life.

How to improve the resource efficiency practices?

- **Adopt a "reduce, reuse, and recycle" approach for office supplies, such as paper, toner cartridges, and stationery.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (recycling bins, awareness campaigns)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee education

- **Encourage double-sided printing and digital document sharing to reduce paper usage.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy
  - Costs: Low (awareness campaigns)
  - Time Required: Short Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee awareness

- **Source eco-friendly and sustainable office supplies, including those made from recycled materials.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (sustainable supplies)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Supplier research and agreements

- **Instead of discarding the empty cartridge plastics, refill the toner cartridge when it runs out.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (refilling services)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Toner cartridge refilling services

- **Implement practices to reduce paper usage during events, such as digital agendas and online materials.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (digital materials)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Event planning adjustments

Sustainable transportation

On average, a single passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually.Fossil fuel consumption accounts for approximately 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In the European Union, road transport is responsible for almost 73% of total CO_2 emissions from the transport sector.

E-scooters produce zero tailpipe emissions and have a relatively small environmental impact compared to traditional gasoline-powered vehicles.

How to improve the sustainable transportation practices?

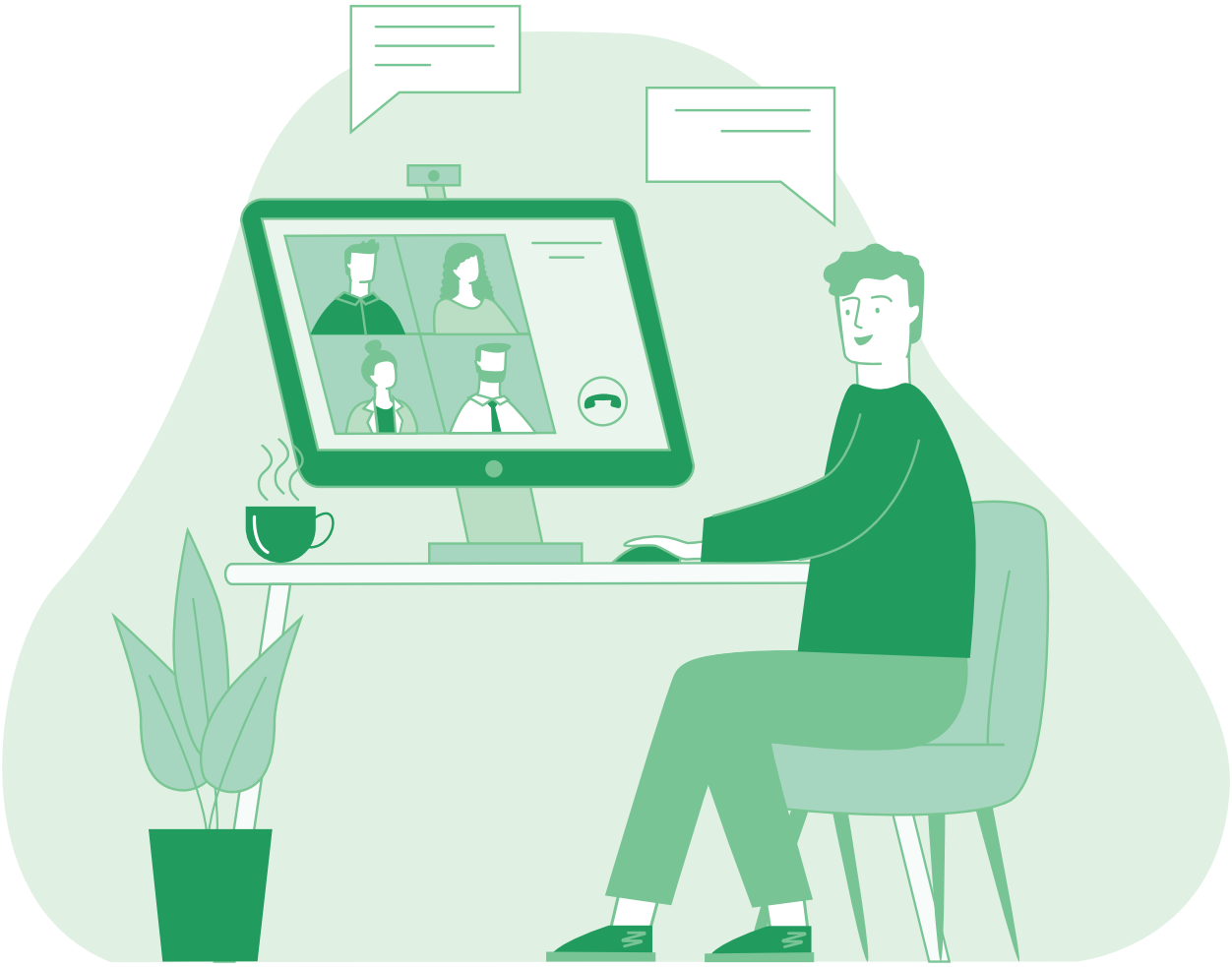
- **Promote commuting options like walking and cycling and provide incentives and bike racks at the workplace.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (bike racks, incentives)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Employee incentives and infrastructure

- **Encourage the use of public transportation among employees through incentives like discounted transit passes.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (transit pass incentives)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Transit pass agreements

- **Consider incorporating electric or hybrid vehicles for use within the organization's needs.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult
  - Costs: Moderate to High (vehicle purchase/leasing)
  - Time Required: Medium to Long Term
  - Other Requirements: Vehicle selection and charging infrastructure

Remote work

The global shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. The pandemic-related decrease in commuting and office energy use resulted in a daily reduction of 16 million tons of CO_2 emissions worldwide. This showcased its potential as an effective sustainability measure to combat climate change and improve air quality. Embracing remote work practices post-pandemic can continue to contribute to a greener and more sustainable future.



How to improve the remote work practices?

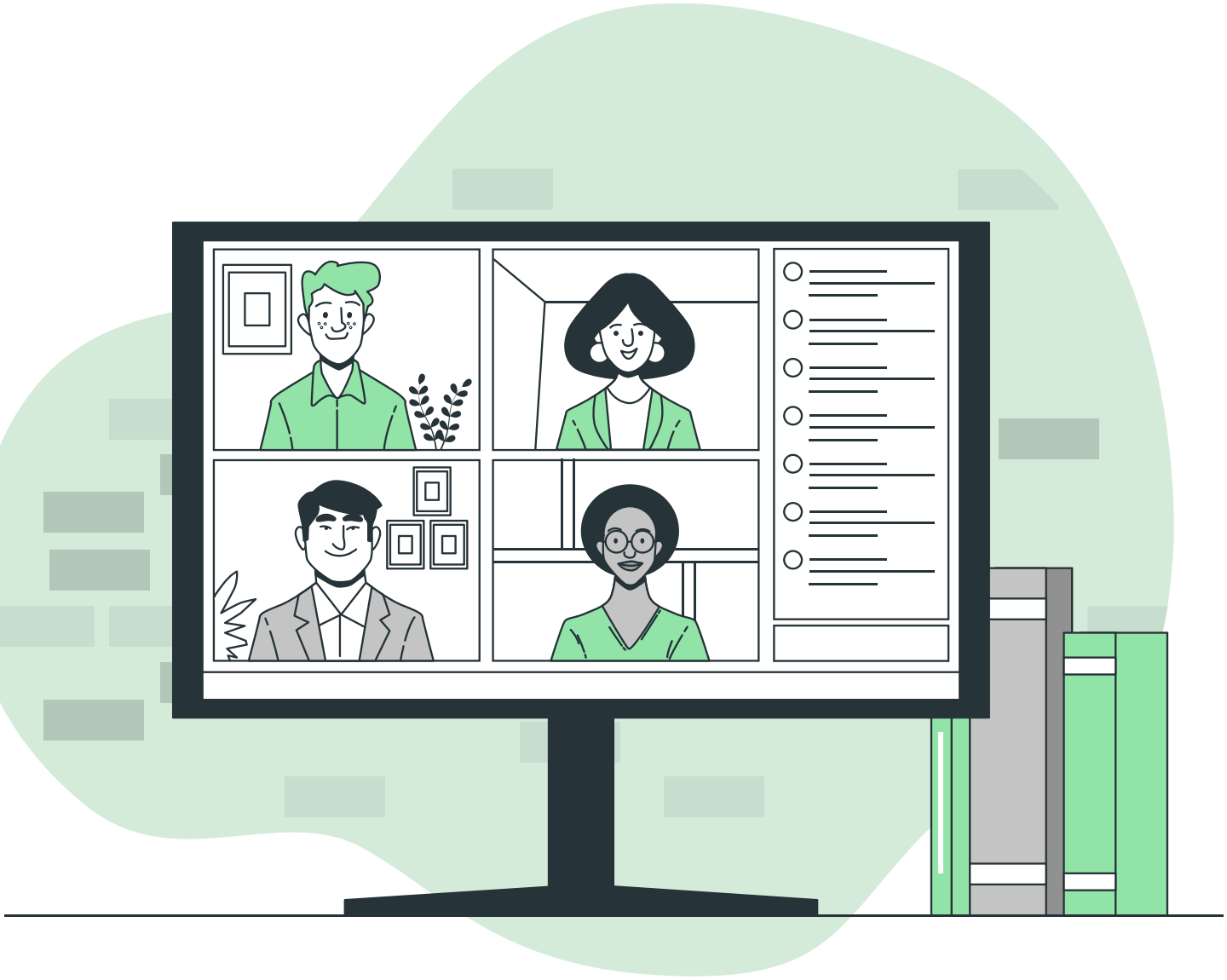
- **Develop a remote work policy that promotes work-life balance and emphasizes the environmental benefits of reduced commuting and office energy use.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (policy development)
  - Time Required: Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Policy creation and communication

- **Provide employees with the necessary technology and tools to support remote work efficiently.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (technology provisioning)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Technology procurement and setup

- **Upgrade your digital infrastructure to include secure and reliable internet connectivity and collaboration tools.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate to Difficult
  - Costs: Moderate to High (IT infrastructure upgrades)
  - Time Required: Medium to Long Term
  - Other Requirements: IT expertise and investment

Virtual or hybrid meetings and events

Virtual or hybrid meetings and events significantly reduce the carbon footprint associated with travel. For instance, a two-hour online meeting with 100 participants can save approximately 2.4 tons of CO_2 emissions compared to an in-person meeting.



How to improve practices for virtual or hybrid meeting and events?

- **Prioritize virtual or hybrid events over in-person gatherings whenever possible to minimize travel-related emissions.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (virtual meeting tools)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Event planning adjustments

- **Promote sustainability when conducting hybrid event, including sharing e-materials and digital agendas to reduce paper usage, ordering sustainable food with reusable utensils.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Sustainable catering agreements, digital materials preparation

- **Encourage presenters and attendees to share materials electronically instead of distributing physical handouts.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Easy to Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Sustainable catering agreements, digital materials preparation

- **Use virtual event analytics to measure attendee engagement and event success, minimizing the need for post-event surveys and printed materials.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (software/tools)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Data analytics expertise, software integration

Sustainable food

Sustainable food sourcing, such as locally-grown and organic produce, as well as reduced meat consumption can contribute to lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduces the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transportation.

How to improve sustainable food practices?

- **Source catering from local and sustainable suppliers to support regional economies and reduce the carbon footprint of food transportation.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (software/tools)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Sustainable catering agreements

- **Offer plant-based and no meat menu options during events and meetings to promote sustainable and healthier food choices.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Menu planning and allergen consideration

- **Implement food waste reduction strategies, such as donation programs, to minimize food waste.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (program setup)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Coordination with food banks or donation organizations

- **Choose biodegradable or compostable food packaging materials for take-out meals and office events to reduce plastic waste.**
  - Implementation Difficulty: Moderate
  - Costs: Low to Moderate (program setup)
  - Time Required: Short to Medium Term
  - Other Requirements: Comunication with food banks

This Roadmap, while providing fundamental guidance, serves as a starting point. Aiming to enable easier implementation and adoption of sustainable work practices in NGOs and other entities where possible and where there is a will for change, the project team prepared **Guide for Sustainable work practices.**

The full content of the SustainABLE Guide is accessible here.