

# SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IDEAS



A selection of practical sustainable business ideas to help you achieve the 14 Business Commitments. We will update these from time to time, so check the website for the latest version - [www.sustainabletourism.nz](http://www.sustainabletourism.nz)

**Economic Sustainability**  
**Visitor Sustainability**  
**Host Community Sustainability**  
**Environmental Sustainability**

## Economic Sustainability

The Economic Commitments reflect three key aspects that contribute to business success - profitability, investment and productivity.

### **Commitment 1 - Sustainable Businesses** **Businesses are focused on long-term financial performance**

- Establish financial reporting as a standard business practice. Measure and report financial performance against plan/budget on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Regularly talk about your vision and mission with your team. Even if you are a one-or two-person operation, you should still have a vision and mission.
- Make sure you have a long term plan (3-5 years) which is regularly reviewed.
- As part of your business planning, undertake a **SWOT** or **PESTLE** analysis.
- Manage supplier invoices according to your cashflow projections. **Cashflow forecasting tips**
- Buy in bulk and from local suppliers where possible.
- Balance the time you spend on financials, people, processes and customers.
- Make time for 'blue sky' thinking.
- Share your success. Consider awards you could apply for to showcase your progress and inspire others to do the same, including the **New Zealand Tourism Awards**.

**Tips for preparing a business plan**  
**General business tools**  
**Tips for improving cash flow**

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## **Commitment 2 - Capital Investment**

### **Businesses invest capital to grow, and/or to improve quality and productivity**

- Start all investment processes with a thorough analysis.
- Base your investment decisions on four criteria:
  - purchase price (total investment sum including all related costs such as transport and installation)
  - operating expenses
  - expected lifespan
  - operational characteristics of the asset, such as operating hours after scheduled maintenance breaks and forecasts of breakdown times
- Create a purchasing checklist of factors to take into account when purchasing capital equipment.
- Actively consider sustainability in the design of products and services, e.g. whole of life consideration; operating costs vs. purchase price; whether it is made locally or offshore; social and environmental impacts of making the product; whether it is designed to be easily recycled.

[Tips for attracting investors](#)

[Tips on budgeting for expansion](#)

[Funds and grants](#)

[New Zealand Green Building Council](#)

## **Commitment 3 – Productivity**

### **Businesses innovate and have effective strategies to mitigate the effects of seasonality**

- Collaborate. Combating seasonality can be most effectively undertaken as a network of tourism operators in your region.
- Encourage innovation from your team.
- Define your point of difference and make sure all your team are aware of this.
- Make sure you have a strong presence on social media. This is a quick and effective way to market seasonal campaigns or to reach specific audiences. [Social media tips](#)
- Develop an authentic, local and genuine product.
- Consider developing a specific low-season product or package to address seasonal issues.
- Ensure you have a system to capture data and observations around visitor behaviour and patterns.

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## Visitor Sustainability

The Visitor Commitments are designed to grow visitor satisfaction through business improvements based on strong insight. They also reflect the tourism industry's responsibility to educate our visitors about how to respect nature, respect culture and respect their host community.

### Commitment 4 - Visitor Satisfaction

**Businesses undertake customer satisfaction monitor, evaluation and reporting**

- Build visitor satisfaction monitoring into your normal business processes.
- Compare yourself to your competition to gauge how well you are doing – benchmarking using a common measure such as **Net Promotor Score** allows you to understand your relative position.
- Develop a system to actively monitor and reply to online reviews and feedback.
- Encourage visitor feedback and reviews.
- Have a system for dealing with negative online feedback.
- Consider an online survey rather than on paper (it's more environmentally friendly).
- Ensure you actually report on, review and address the results of your surveys.
- Consider an independently assessed rating system such as **Qualmark**.

### Commitment 5 - Product and Market Development

**Businesses innovate to improve or upgrade their offering to enhance the visitor experience**

- Regularly apply an innovation approach of reviewing, rethinking and redesigning your products – this will enable you to meet the ever-changing needs of customers and improve your competitive positioning.
- Aim to constantly innovate – it's critical for differentiating yourself.
- Invest in new products and infrastructure that will address seasonality and give visitors a reason to stay longer and spend more.
- Have a pipeline of new ideas. Revisit and add to these often.

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## Commitment 6 - Visitor Engagement Businesses educate visitors about New Zealand's cultural and behavioural expectations

- Promote the Tiaki Promise to visitors - go to the Tourism New Zealand website for more information and to download the video and brochure.
- Inspire. Encourage visitors to embrace our culture and behavioural expectations as part of what you do.
- Explain to visitors in a light and uplifting way how we go about things and what our values are – it is not about setting rules or policing your visitors.
- Talk to your visitors about the concept of Manaakitanga (showing respect, hospitality and care for others).
- Ensure all your team are trained on where your visitors are from and the culture, behaviour and environment they're used to.
- Make it easy for your visitors to behave in certain ways, e.g. ensure you have the right facilities to help them dispose of rubbish responsibly. And remember to 'practise what you preach'.
- Consider having a waiata for your business – [How to get waiata fit](#)
- Include Māori language in your interaction with visitors. [Māori language for technology](#); [Māori language for the environment](#); [Kiwa Digital](#).

### Visitor Engagement Examples

[Queenstown Cares visitor engagement plan](#)

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## Host Community Sustainability

The Host Community Commitments suggest ways that tourism businesses can contribute to the communities in which they operate: quality jobs, connecting with the community, and supporting local and regional suppliers.

### Commitment 7 - Sustainable Employment Businesses pay a fair wage to all staff

- Consider training staff in several areas of your business. It's more interesting and offers more opportunities for them, and gives you backup if you need to cover roles at short notice.
- Have a succession plan for all your key roles.
- Review all job descriptions on a regular basis.
- Undertake a critical review of your recruitment needs as part of your annual business planning.
- Have a plan in place to identify your most talented and committed employees.
- Identify any positions in your business that are currently paid below the living wage and evaluate the cost and benefits of paying the living wage as a minimum to all staff.

#### Sustainable employment examples

Haka Tours Maori Tour Leader Scholarship

Skycity pays sustainable wage to all employees

### Commitment 8 - Quality Employment Businesses support their workforce to flourish and succeed

- Create a distinct company culture that sets your business apart from other employers and use this as a driver for motivating and retaining your workforce.
- Have written role descriptions for every position in your business.
- Ensure all staff have performance development plans and the opportunity to grow.
- Offer progressive career opportunities.
- Encourage feedback and new ideas from staff, e.g. a regular agenda item at staff meetings, suggestion box, staff rep at management meetings.
- Document your key processes and Standard Operating Procedures.
- Set goals in place to improve staff engagement and make plans to achieve these.
- Make sure you respond to staff feedback and manage expectations around this.

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- Make a commitment to increase staff diversity. [More about diversity](#)
- Include targets and goals for employees in annual performance reviews.
- Consider how you can incentivise staff who meet or exceed their goals.

### **Commitment 9 - Community Engagement**

#### **Businesses actively engage with the communities in which they operate**

- Inform your host community about what you are doing and why.
- Consult with your host community to obtain their views and feedback on the things you are planning or doing that may impact your community.
- Involve your host community to make them active contributors to the things you are doing and let them know where you need their contribution, support or agreement.
- Be an active and positive member of your community and get involved in wider activities within your community, e.g. sports clubs, restoration initiatives, community groups.
- Work with other businesses or community groups to effect change in your community and the tourism industry, e.g. involvement in business networking initiatives, volunteering on a local board.
- Consider forming long-term relationships with community groups, e.g. formalised sponsorship, providing mentoring to local groups.
- Actively donate products or services to community initiatives.
- Develop a sponsorship policy which identifies which community groups or causes you support.
- Create an internship or tourism work-experience programme.
- Identify and support a specific local cause, e.g. [Predator Free NZ](#), [Squawk Squad](#), restoration groups, [Million Metres](#), Lions, Rotary.
- Develop a community engagement plan.
- Plan regular communications to update your local community. [Community Planning Toolkit - Community Engagement](#)
- Offer special rates or hold special events for your local community.
- Take part in local [conservation events](#).
- Consider a staff volunteering programme where staff get a paid day(s) to volunteer in the community.

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- Volunteer as a group for a local project – a great team-building and bonding exercise.
- Keep a register of all the ways you give back to your local community, e.g. sponsorships, free products, in kind hours, representation on local boards.
- Donate to charities.
- Cooperate and share with other businesses.
- Get to know key organisations or agencies that are most important to the sustainability of your business, e.g. Council personnel, community groups, [Energy Efficiency, Conservation Authority](#) and [Sustainable Business Network](#).
- Donate used or surplus equipment to local school(s) or community groups.
- Consciously support local suppliers.
- Get involved in local government– have a say on district and regional plans, or council politics.
- Ensure your website reflects your sustainability values. Have a dedicated 'sustainability' page.
- Give preference to local recruits when you employ new staff, and buy local goods and services where you can.
- [Inspiring Communities tools and resources](#)

### Community Engagement Examples

The [Murupara community](#) take tourists into their local school  
Eden Park's '[The Hood](#)' programme  
[Skyline Queenstown's community events](#)  
Auckland Airport's [12 Days of Christmas initiative](#)

### Commitment 10 - Sustainable Supply Chain

**Businesses have socially and environmentally sustainable supply chains.**

- Source your products locally, regionally and nationally before resorting to imported goods.
- Let your suppliers and potential suppliers in your region know what you need and what you expect. Involve them in your efforts to be sustainable while providing business opportunities to local enterprises.
- Consider teaming up with other businesses to create the purchasing power that will motivate producers and suppliers to follow your sustainability efforts.
- Become an agent of change. Encourage your suppliers to raise their standards if they do not meet your criteria. Tell your visitors and host community about your efforts. Include details of your efforts in all your online content as these are the details that potential visitors are

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increasingly looking for.

- Sustainable uniform suppliers – [Little Yellow Bird](#), [Adventure Outfitters](#)
- Sustainable event and promotional supplies – [All About Promo](#)



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## Environmental Sustainability

The Environmental Commitments suggest practical actions that tourism businesses can do to benefit the environment: ecological restoration, reducing environmental impact such as carbon use and waste, and educating others on the importance of protecting New Zealand's natural environment.

### Commitment 11: Ecological Restoration Businesses contribute to ecological restoration initiatives.

#### Enhance the Environment

- Become familiar with your local restoration or conservation projects.
- Volunteer or donate to a local restoration (tree planting) project.
- Get involved in local predator free or backyard trapping programmes. [Predator Free NZ](#)
- Inform your customers about local restoration or conservation projects.
- Make caring for nature part of the culture of your business.
- Get your staff involved.
- Plant trees. [Trees That Count](#) and [Million Metres](#)
- Clean up beaches. [Sustainable Coastlines](#)
- [Adopt a valley](#)
- Sponsor pest traps. [Squawk Squad](#)
- Celebrate [Conservation Week](#).

**Commented [LR4]:** Geoff Ensor from DOC has suggested we split this section into 2 parts: one around reducing your impact, and the second around enhancing the environment. I attempted to do this... but then I realised that a lot of it is repeated later in in the carbon use and waste sections! So I've attempted to rearrange it but it probably needs another set of eyes to check it. I think part of the issue is that there is no specific commitment for water use; it doesn't really fit anywhere...

#### Ecological Restoration examples

[Rotorua Canopy Tours pest eradication](#)  
[Christchurch Sea Kayaking cleaning up the Avon River](#)

### Commitment 12 - Carbon Reduction Businesses have carbon reduction programmes towards carbon neutrality.

- Review your carbon use and make a plan to reduce carbon in these general areas:
  - transportation
  - energy use
  - products purchased
  - services purchased
  - waste

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- Ensure refrigeration/heating systems are maintained appropriately, set at appropriate temperatures and regularly serviced.
- Replace old lightbulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs.
- Ensure the temperature setting on all hot water heaters is between 60°C & 65°C.
- Investigate installing motion sensitive/timed light switches.
- Record your monthly electricity, gas, fuel and waste usage, and monitor what impact your changes are having. This helps to pick up unnecessary wastage.
- Put hot water cylinder wraps on single skin cylinders.
- Ensure that your premises are well insulated. Insulate all windows, e.g. double glazing or other insulation methods, and use your curtains wisely.
- Use air curtains where main doors are kept open for long periods.
- Dry any laundry outside on the line.
- Block any chimneys off when not in use.
- Switch off when not in use. Turn off unnecessary lights and equipment, especially at the end of the day. Turn off unused appliances at the wall, e.g. cellphone chargers, microwaves, televisions.
- Investigate installing solar hot water heating to provide heating for the existing and planned ensuite showers.
- Ensure energy and water efficiency is designed into the planned upgrade of buildings.
- Research information on alternative fuel and efficient engine options when you make your next purchase of a new vehicle.
- Take the Fuelsaver ([www.fuelsaver.govt.nz](http://www.fuelsaver.govt.nz)) test and pick one bad driving habit to change.
- Take the bike or walk for short trips.
- Choose energy-efficient appliances (look for the energy label).
- Give priority to other energy-efficient technologies, e.g. solar heating, movement sensors, heat exchangers, grey water heat exchange system.
- Ensure heated swimming pools / spa pools are covered when not in use.
- Use energy-efficient lighting, buy energy efficient appliances and switch off when not in use.
- Investigate energy-efficient technologies for heating and cooling, lighting, refrigeration, office equipment, hot water. A good place to start is the [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority](#).

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- Investigate electric vehicles to see if might suit your operations.
- Establish standard operating procedures for operating processes to ensure they are consistently carried out.
- Consider using an [online carbon calculator](#) to get an idea of your carbon use. You could also get professional assistance.
- Ask your suppliers and service partners about their carbon reduction practices and engage with them to reduce their carbon footprints.
- Think about how you can minimise the ecological footprint of your business and any new products or services you are considering introducing – the more you minimise impact, the less you need to mitigate or restore.
- Think of innovative ways that you can combine your commercial, community and environmental interests so each can benefit.
- Investigate how carbon offsetting can help you achieve carbon neutrality:
  - compensate for your carbon production by financially contributing to carbon offset schemes
  - support carbon sequestration (long-term storage of carbon) programmes like tree planting or wetland restoration
- Publicise your carbon reduction efforts on your website and on social media to become an inspiration for others and support visitors in their decision-making.
- [How to develop a carbon offset program](#) (source: Adventure Travel News)

## Carbon Reduction examples

[Jucy's electric cars](#)

[Auckland Airport reduces carbon emissions by over 22%](#)

[Shore Trips and Tours 100% electric tour coach](#)

[YHA New Zealand](#)

## Commitment 13 - Waste Management

### Businesses have waste reduction and management programmes.

- Think about how you can minimise your ecological footprint –the more you minimise impacts the less you need to mitigate or restore.
- Regularly review your ecological footprint and identify ways you can reduce impact and waste.
- Have goals around reducing packaging and non-recyclable waste.

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- Establish a purchasing policy based on sustainable supply chains (Commitment 10) and avoid purchasing goods that are not compostable, recyclable or otherwise recoverable.
- Communicate your goal to reduce non-recoverable waste to all your suppliers.
- Make sure your organic waste is composted, put in a worm farm or fed to animals rather than going to landfill.
- Consider the entire life cycle of the products you purchase and whether products can be recycled, sold or donated after use.
- Ensure all your hazardous (toxic, flammable, explosive, corrosive and radioactive) waste is separated, safely stored and disposed of properly.
- Avoid single-portion packaged items, e.g. sugar sachets, soaps.
- Buy recycled products, e.g. paper, toilet paper, cardboard, packaging, toners, and choose no or environmentally friendly packaging.
- Recycle glass, paper, plastics, aluminium and tin. If you cannot recycle something in your community, look at supply chain for minimisation or substitution.
- Offer a facility for visitors to refill water bottles so they can be re-used.
- Take your own bags to the shops and say "no thanks" to plastic bags.
- If you serve coffee in disposable cups, investigate the [Use Your Own Cup](#) guide.
- Develop reuse and recycle systems.
- Eliminate single-use printer cartridges.
- Eliminate disposables: cups, plates, plastic cutlery, and paper towels. Replace with reusable/washable alternatives.
- Adjust your printer default setting to the double sided option if available.
- Encourage to staff to think about whether they really need to have a hard copy before pressing the 'print' button.
- Reuse paper printed on only one side for scrap paper.
- Consider using refillable containers for guests' toiletries instead of individually wrapped and bottled products.
- Dispose of special wastes in the recommended manner (e.g. used oil, batteries, used computers or mobile phones). Check with your local council or recycling centre for details, or see the Ministry for the Environment website.
- Consider whether products can be recycled, sold or donated after use.

### **Waste Management examples**

[Sudima goes plastic-free](#)

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The Rubbish Trip zero waste roadshow

## **Other Ideas to Minimise Environmental Impact**

- Explore non-toxic inks and sustainable paper supply for brochures and printing.
- Use natural cleaning products (vinegar, salt, baking soda) or change to biodegradable products.
- Offer organic food when possible.
- Avoid the use of toxic substances, e.g. sprays, detergents.
- Install water-saving fixtures and devices, e.g. dual flush toilets or put a filled used plastic bottle into the cistern to displace water, flow restrictors, regulators, percussive/ self-closing taps, low flow shower mixers.
- Make an effort to consciously reduce water use outdoors, e.g. use garden mulches, trigger gun for outdoor water use.
- Repair any leaky taps promptly.
- Reduce water use outdoors, e.g. use garden mulches, and a trigger gun for outdoor water use.
- Plant native plants in your garden to reduce watering.
- Use a timer on your sprinklers so that they can be used at dawn or dusk.
- When selecting new appliances and plumbing fittings look for AAAAA water conservation ratings.
- Collect and use rainwater and recycle grey water.
- Choose environmentally friendly packaging, e.g. biodegradable, recyclable paper vs. plastic.
- Only use office and hygiene paper that is made from 100% recycled paper and is non-bleached.
- Monitor what goes into municipal waste water and storm water systems and septic tanks.
- Maintain high quality water/effluent output filtration systems.

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### Commitment 14 – Education

**Businesses actively engage with their visitors and communities on the importance of restoring, protecting and enhancing New Zealand’s natural environment.**

- Lead by example and share the stories of what you are doing and the difference you are making.
- 
- Select and promote products that meet recognised environmental criteria, e.g. Environmental Choice, Energy Star, WSAA Water Conservation.
- Make protection of your ‘green space’ part of your product and visitor experience.
- Know your local flora and fauna – what’s vulnerable, what efforts are being undertaken to protect them.
- Tell your visitors about the Tiaki Promise and kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the environment).
- Get in touch with your local Department of Conservation office, local and regional authorities, private landowners and community projects to see if they have actual or potential projects you could link up with. Opportunities could include:
  - sponsorship of programmes or restoration projects
  - species sponsorship
  - taking responsibility for a patch of land
  - running trap lines
  - volunteering with the Department of Conservation
- Work out ways to measure what you do – having evidence that you are making a difference is important for sustaining momentum.

*Become an inspiration for others!*

*We would love to share stories of all the good work that’s going on towards creating a sustainable New Zealand tourism industry. If you are making good progress against one or more of the business commitments, email us at [info@tia.org.nz](mailto:info@tia.org.nz) with your story and inspire others across the industry.*

**Additional information, resources and useful links can be found on [www.sustainabletourism.nz](http://www.sustainabletourism.nz)**