

# **The Sustainable and Just Association Benchmark (2021)**



**By**  
**Coro Strandberg**  
**President**  
**Strandberg Consulting**

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## Introduction

The Sustainable and Just Association Benchmark (2021) has been re-released to reflect findings from the [Sustainable and Just Association Report](#) and [Case Studies](#).

Use this tool to benchmark your association's practices to help your members contribute to and benefit from the transition to a sustainable and just future.

Read this thought leader document for further insight in how the role of business, industry and professions are changing in society: [Future of Business in Society: Global Thought Leader Study](#).

Please contact the author if you would like a free word version of this document: [coro@corostrandberg.com](mailto:coro@corostrandberg.com).

## Sustainable and Just Association Benchmark (2021)

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Focus Area	Practice	Association Practice
1. Definitions and Scope	<p>Has adopted a definition and principles that define the ESG field of practice and enable communications.</p> <p><i>How does the association define ESG? What topics are in scope for ESG?</i></p>	
2. Board Governance	<p>Provides board education, adopts public ESG policies or commitments, integrates ESG into association’s purpose, mandate, vision, values, strategic plan, goals, targets, and reporting</p> <p><i>Evidence of an ESG strategic plan or work plan for the association</i></p> <p><i>Link to ESG policies.</i></p>	
3. Management System	<p>Designated staff responsible</p> <p>Most senior executive responsible</p> <p>Name and role of ESG member committee, task force or advisory group that recommends initiatives and priorities</p>	
4. Operations	<p>Office systems, meetings, conferences, hiring practices, procurement, investments, and other operational practices demonstrate best ESG practices</p> <p>Holds conversations with suppliers about how they can improve their ESG practices and offer ESG aligned options and choices; ESG is included in association’s procurement policy (e.g. to source from suppliers who have ESG plans in place and who offer ESG options)</p> <p>Follows a green meeting/conference protocol with the following elements: source promotional products with ESG qualities, eliminate paper and plastic</p>	

	<p>bottles, reduce waste, use green venues, consolidate number of meetings, hold virtual meetings, etc.; includes ESG criteria in RFPs for conferences and events</p> <p>Integrates ESG factors in financial endowments and investments</p>	
<b>5. Risks and Opportunities</b>	Conducts research and provides information on ESG trends, innovation, risks, opportunities that will affect the future performance of the sector / profession; develops business case and benefits for member action	
<b>6. Information</b>	Includes ESG information in regular member communications, e.g. ESG news, reports, information on government programs, etc.	
<b>7. Education</b>	<p>Includes ESG in conferences (e.g., as a theme or plenary), webinars, workshops, websites, mentoring programs, peer-based learning, communities of practice</p> <p>Engages a trusted organization with ESG expertise to deliver information, training and resources to members</p> <p>ESG is included as a component of members Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</p>	
<b>8. Consultation</b>	Consults and surveys members to identify best practices and priorities	
<b>9. Practices</b>	Offers ESG awards and provides case studies and inventories of best practices to recognize and inspire leadership	
<b>10. Tools</b>	<p>Creates/shares ESG tips, articles, toolkits, how-to guides, checklists, guidelines, helpdesk, and other resources</p> <p>Operates an ESG portal, centre of excellence or hub on website</p>	
<b>11. Industry Collaboration</b>	<p>Supports joint ESG R&amp;D, working groups and pilot projects that support industry collaboration and innovation to overcome ESG barriers and pursue ESG opportunities; supports the industry to work on ESG issues together</p> <p>Supports members to leverage pooled assets (e.g. joint social purchasing)</p>	
<b>12. Metrics</b>	Develops common metrics/KPIs to measure the industry's overall ESG performance and enable sector benchmarking and peer comparisons	
<b>13. Goals</b>	Develops shared ESG vision, goals, targets, metrics, monitoring and continuous improvement for members to advance on ESG together; sets targets for industry or professional advancement	

<p><b>14. Monitoring and Reporting</b></p>	<p>Regularly reviews the sector's / profession's progress toward the Association's ESG goals</p> <p>Develops and regularly updates an internal database that tracks the sector's / profession's ESG performance</p> <p>Publicly reports in regular or annual ESG reports on the association's ESG impacts and activities, including progress towards ESG targets and the association's overall performance</p> <p><i>Link to last report</i></p>	
<p><b>15. Stakeholder Engagement</b></p>	<p>Regularly consults industry/profession's stakeholders on their ESG priorities and expectations</p> <p><i>What is the format? Stakeholder advisory committee, case-by-case basis, independently facilitated, etc.</i></p> <p>Facilitates cross-sectoral information sharing</p> <p>Creates common platform for addressing shared ESG issues</p> <p>Partners and collaborates with external stakeholders on issues of mutual concern / benefit</p> <p>Provides support to members on how to engage with stakeholders</p> <p>Prioritizes the sector's / profession's top stakeholders and develops and monitors goals to foster effective and reciprocal relationships</p>	
<p><b>16. Government</b></p>	<p>Proactively seeks opportunities to comment on the development of federal, provincial, regional, and municipal ESG strategies, regulations, programs and plans; includes ESG considerations as part of the association's budget submissions; provides ESG expertise to governments, informing governments of ESG role the association is playing</p>	

	<p>Endorses government ESG policies</p> <p>Participates in government ESG collaborations</p> <p>Seeks out and applies for government funding to help the sector or profession transition to a sustainable future</p> <p>Engages with governments on public policy measures to advance ESG</p> <p>Develops an ESG narrative / story members can use with governments where they lack this capacity</p> <p>Joins ESG advocacy coalitions to lobby governments on an accelerated ESG response</p> <p>Engages NGOs and other organizations to collaborate on shared advocacy objectives</p> <p>Advocates for government policy to support members to improve their ESG; includes in the association's Government Relations Plan measures that support the association's ESG goals and targets; ensures the association has consistent advocacy positions across its Government Relations program</p>	
<b>17. Customers</b>	<p>Researches customer ESG priorities</p> <p>Educates the sector's customers about industry's / profession's ESG role</p>	
<b>18. Suppliers</b>	<p>Provides ESG guidelines for procurement and sourcing to members (e.g. sustainable purchasing guidelines)</p>	
<b>19. Value-Chain Collaboration</b>	<p>Identifies adjacent sectors or allied professions where an aligned ESG response is needed to ensure the success of the overall value chain, partners to foster best practices and knowledge sharing, tackle barriers and challenges together, and advance innovation; initiates or joins ESG collaborations with other associations, addressing shared risks and opportunities; mobilizes other sectors/professions on ESG</p>	

	<p>Creates tools and resources for partner and allied groups to aid their ESG efforts</p> <p>Provides ESG tools and resources for organizations where members work and develop strategies to enhance the ESG competencies of organizations and sectors that hire members [Professional Associations only]</p>	
<b>20. Impact Finance</b>	Contributes to the development of the Impact Finance sector	
<b>21. Marketing</b>	<p>Develops an ESG public relations program including marketing and branding to communicate member leadership; initiates public awareness campaigns to communicate the ESG performance and leadership of the sector/profession</p> <p><i>Do you have an ESG brand? If so, what is it?</i></p> <p>Helps members market their ESG practices and tell their ESG story (e.g. brand or template members can use in their marketing)</p> <p>Provides ESG voice of industry / profession</p> <p>Positions the sector / profession as offering ESG solutions</p> <p>Includes ESG story in market development and trade and export promotion of the sector</p> <p>Attracts future talent into the profession by profiling the profession's contribution to addressing ESG issues</p>	
<b>22. Public Engagement</b>	Raises public awareness and inspires public action on ESG issues; launches public and consumer education campaigns on ESG actions the public can pursue; encourages public and others to develop solutions to ESG challenges	
<b>23. Mobilization and Position Statements</b>	<p>Issues formal position statements endorsed by the membership outlining members' commitments to ESG topics</p> <p>Endorses ESG commitment statements, charters, or principles and recruits other signatories</p>	

	<p>Releases position papers on the significance of ESG and the industry's or profession's response, and encourages others to do the same</p> <p>Provides ESG awards to external organizations, e.g. government, research institutes, suppliers, and vendors, to generate demand and interest in addressing ESG issues</p>	
<b>24. Standards</b>	<p>Develops and coordinates ESG benchmarks to enable members to assess their performance relative to peers; includes ESG in designations, certifications, curriculum, to formalize practices and enable benchmarking, develops ESG code of practice or rating system</p> <p>Represents industry in standard-setting initiatives</p>	
<b>25. Public Interest</b>	<p>Publicly recognizes professional obligations members owe to clients and the public in relation to ESG topics, to ensure members consider ESG in their decision-making. For example, clarifies how existing ethical obligations address ESG issues, and amends codes of conduct or ethics to explicitly recognize members' professional obligations in relation to ESG issues <i>[Professional Associations only]</i></p>	
<b>26. Verification</b>	<p>Enables auditing of ESG program to support verification of ESG performance</p>	
<b>27. International</b>	<p>Builds ESG partnerships and collaborations with international associations in the sector or profession; finds out about new research, best practices, and experts from international partnerships; recruits them to address ESG issues at conferences and events</p> <p>Help sets international ESG performance standards</p> <p>Promotes industry ESG performance in international arena</p> <p>Promotes relevant global ESG standards to members</p>	
<b>28. Awards</b>	<p>Receives awards for its ESG efforts</p>	