Toolkit innovation guide

Learn how to innovate with your toolkit to engage new and longstanding teams to create an impactful behaviour change programme.

This guide covers information on:

Additional resources

We have lots of interesting case studies on innovative ways to deliver Green Impact – keep up to date by registering for our newsletter and regularly visiting our [lead](#) and [team](#) online resource banks.

If you would like to include any of the ideas in this guide within your own toolkit, please speak to your designated NUS project officer.

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1.0 Using the best toolkit design for your organisation

We help develop Green Impact toolkits that are completely bespoke to each organisation, with many variations.

The most important thing to consider is what will motivate your teams, produce the change you want to see and be suitable for you to support and facilitate. The toolkit is the face of Green Impact but it is increasingly being used as a portal for helping structure activity rather than needing to list absolutely everything anyone could do on sustainability. Keeping in mind the basics of behavior change, it is important to consider that it is there to help make sustainability engaging, provide examples to help guide peer to peer learning, encourage and enable action to happen. Sometimes over-complicating the toolkit itself can detract from these aims. But innovating how it works and what it asks of people can truly enhance your programme year on year.

Below are two of the most common ways to lay out the levels of activity for Green Impact:

1.1. Award levels

This is by far the most common way of arranging your toolkit - by award levels. Bronze criteria are more simple manageable actions with Gold criteria becoming more challenging.

Ordering your toolkit this way makes it easy for teams to see what award level they are working towards, makes it easy for people to see where to start, helps your teams continually improve. It also helps you ensure there's a consistent level of performance across all teams achieving the same level. Finally, it allows you to introduce teams to a complex issue by breaking it down into bronze level, silver level and gold level activities – enabling them to enhance their understanding and activity at a comfortable pace.

Within each of these 'tabs' you are then able to delineate the sustainability themes to both guide users to areas of interest to them and demonstrate the diversity of sustainability activity at your organisation.

1.2. Themes
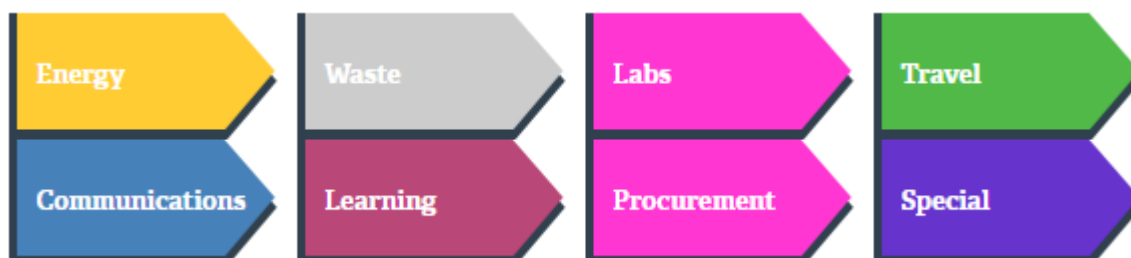
Choosing the theme option allows teams to see what your sustainability priorities are. By working in each section, it allows teams to focus on one theme at a time or indeed to pick and choose between themes as they wish. It provides different marketing options, for example you can promote one

theme each month coordinating events, promotions and workshops on this theme, which would give focus to teams and allows them to complete a section every month.
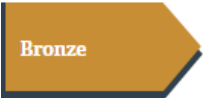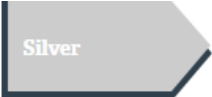
Although some organisations like to give teams the flexibility organisation their toolkit by theme gives, teams often report that they find this toolkit layout daunting, as they have to review all actions before getting started, and where to start is unclear. Within each theme 'tab' you could delineate which actions are bronze or silver etc to help overcome this.

2.0 Choosing the best scoring system for you

Whether you want to be flexible, or have teams complete certain actions, choosing the correct scoring system is essential.

2.1. Point based system

Having a point based scoring system allows you to be flexible. An example of this could be;

Bronze   Achieve 50 points out of 60 available points

Silver   Achieve 80 out of 90 available points

Gold   Achieve 120 out of 130 available points

How you decide on what points should achieve what award level will depend on how many criteria you have and your toolkit design. If you have each criteria only worth 1 point each, in the above example, teams would have to complete 50 criteria to achieve bronze – which is a big ask! However, most organisations allocate points to actions based on their difficulty and impact. For example:

		Ease of implementation				
		1 (easy)	2	3	4	5 (difficult)
Impact of action	1 (low impact)	2	3	4	5	6
	2	3	4	5	6	7
	3	4	5	6	7	8

4	5	6	7	8	9
5 **(high impact)**	6	7	8	9	10

2.2. Action based system

Some organisations want their Green Impact teams to achieve a certain number of actions before they achieve an award. This ensures that all teams who are taking part are implementing the same criteria, which lends continuity across the organisation. An example would be:

Bronze — Achieves all 10 bronze criteria

Silver — Achieved bronze then completed all 20 silver criteria

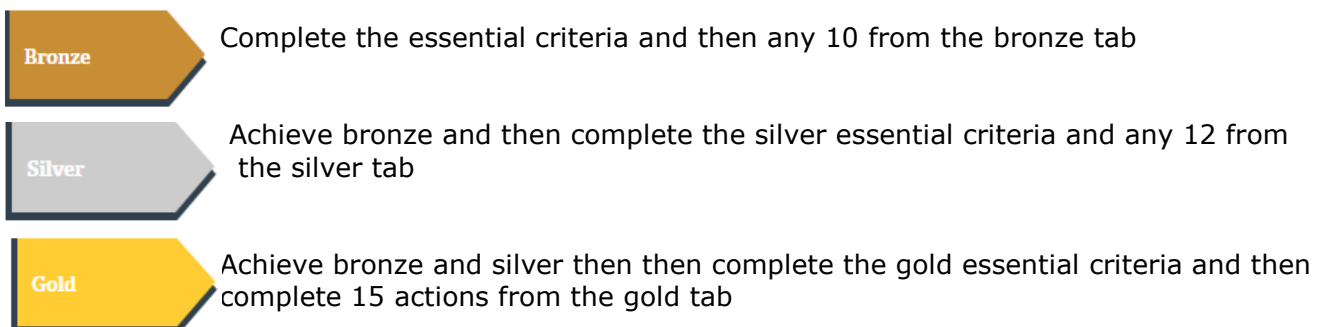Gold — Achieved bronze and silver then completed all 15 gold criteria
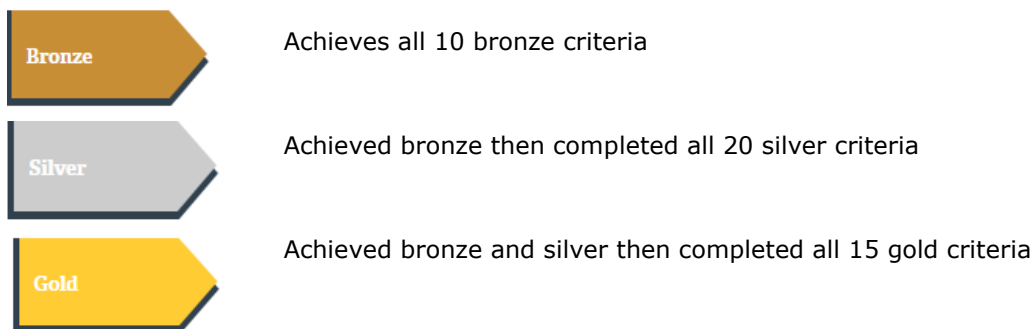
Making the awards cumulative, will ensure that all criteria need to be achieved and all teams are working to the same standard.

If points are less important to your teams then you could also increase the flexibility of this approach by asking that a certain number of actions are completed within or across tabs rather than asking for everything to be completed or it being on a cumulative basis.

For example, in a thematic toolkit, you could state that a bronze award required 20 actions to be completed from across the toolkit, a silver award 40, and gold 60.

2.3. Essential and 'pick & mix'

This scoring system has the best of both options, where you can stipulate essential criteria, whilst giving teams the option to pick and choose from a selection of other criteria, to make up their points.

Bronze — Complete the essential criteria and then any 10 from the bronze tab

Silver — Achieve bronze and then complete the silver essential criteria and any 12 from the silver tab

Gold — Achieve bronze and silver then then complete the gold essential criteria and then complete 15 actions from the gold tab

The flexibility of this lets teams choose criteria which they have an interest in, making the toolkit more accessible to them, whilst allowing you to choose your priorities.

The toolkit software allows plentiful options so be sure to talk through your ideas with your dedicated NUS project officer.

2.4 Number input for actions

We have developed functionality within the toolkit so that for all or certain actions, teams can record exact numbers of activities undertaken. This means that if you are asking for example, that they have asked up to 100 people to sign a pledge, you could provide a box on the toolkit in which the team can write how many people they did engage. Or, if wanting all teams to record the amount of energy saved over the course of the programme, if that is measurable locally.

This may help you better record specific impacts and outcomes, however it should be carefully considered as to whether it is of use and will enhance the project, or if it will confuse teams and won't be fully taken up.

Your NUS Project Officer will be able to support and advise you in this process.

2.5 How many actions?

Again, there's a lot of flexibility in how many actions you include in your toolkit. Some organisations like the actions to reflect their priorities, others want to provide teams with a really broad set of actions that cover all elements of sustainability and social justice, so they can see the full potential of their Green Impact work. What's really important is that your 'starting levels', usually bronze, are achievable and don't appear daunting to people. Therefore we recommend no more than 20 actions in either bronze or silver levels, or your local equivalent.

Just be aware of how many actions are listed when a team clicks 'reveal all' – you may be suggesting they need to choose just a handful in order to get an award, but if presented with 100 to choose from, it can be daunting!

3.0 Excellence, projects and open actions

Excellence, projects and open actions allow teams the flexibility to think of their own ideas on how they would like their department to become more involved with Green Impact.

3.1 Excellence

An idea developed in partnership with some of our Green Impact participant organisations, Excellence is often used as an opportunity for gold or top achieving teams to divert away from taking individual actions within the toolkit to developing their own, higher-level projects, that could be expanded across the organisation.

You can decide to implement Excellence projects for any team, but we suggest keeping this as a higher-level project approach – it should be aspirational and therefore inspire 'younger' teams to strive for this in the future. It should also reward those who are going above and beyond what is in the workbook and should therefore accredit those who are able to do this at a high level, not just anyone who would prefer not to take part in the workbook itself. Encouraging collaboration across Excellence teams is also a great way to diversify the actions being taken.

We would also suggest that teams must also be able to comply with the following criteria:

- A willingness or desire ready to take on the challenge of something larger than the Green Impact workbook;
- A team who can dedicate a regular portion of their time to the project;
- Have Sustainability/Environmental team support for their project.

You can then decide to integrate this into your toolkit as an extra tab, outlining the stages of an Excellence project within each action – planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluating etc. Setting deadlines for each stage will be important to ensuring you can support the teams well and gives them some structure to work within.

Ensure you profile Excellence projects well at your awards event to highlight the opportunities for progressing teams, as well as rewarding those who have created the projects themselves. Work with your NUS Project Officer to help decide on how Excellence should be structured, scored and audited.

3.2 Projects
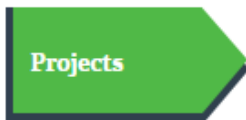
The London School of Economics (LSE) working with NUS, after 8 years of the using the Green Impact programme, redesigned their toolkit, to include projects. The addition of projects was piloted to give staff the opportunity to have ownership of their own work, by creating their own project which they would implement throughout the year, which may not have been covered in the previous Green Impact toolkits.

Teams who opted to complete projects had to submit project proposals, which were assessed for approval by LSE's Sustainability Engagement Officer and NUS. Once approved, teams worked on their project over a six month period. The projects ran alongside teams who wanted to complete the 'normal' toolkit.

Additionally, projects can be added to the standard toolkit, as an extra theme or tab, to allow teams the flexibility to become creative and implement their own ideas, or you can create a list of projects which you would teams to choose from such as a biodiversity or a community project.

Thought should be given to how you will support your teams to complete their projects as this will take more bespoke time than simply guiding them through toolkit actions. You should also consider how you will audit or award the projects. Some organisations have used teams of students to interview project teams, or assess their reports – this could be a fun addition to the auditor role but will need some careful planning!

3.3 Open actions

Having a self-defined or open actions allow teams to design their own criteria to work on. Open criteria can be added throughout the standard toolkit, or can be made into an additional tab. Every department throughout your organisation is different. Having open criteria allow teams to focus on a topic which is of interest to them. This also gives you the opportunity to see what actions teams prefer, to help you shape the rest of your toolkit. You can also save the ideas to add into next year's toolkit!

4.0 Getting started tabs

Getting started tabs are a great way of asking teams for easy wins and to help get them started on their Green Impact journey.

You may have teams who want to take part in Green Impact but feel as if they are unable to commit to achieving the bronze award or are as yet unfamiliar with what's being offered through the programme.

Starter for Ten

The University of Bristol created the 'Starter for Ten' tab which involves teams doing ten simple criteria to get them started on doing actions whilst rewarding teams for their effort. The tab is aimed at teams that want to do something towards the programme but have limited time or capacity.

Getting Started

Central Manchester Universities Hospital have the 'Getting Started' tab to ensure teams have everything in place before moving onto the award sections. For example, they have actions which ask teams to contact the sustainability department for a Green Impact information pack. This would provide the teams with useful resources before they tackle any of the award level actions. It also allows the teams to engage directly with the sustainability team, who can then introduce them to Green Impact. Several other NHS Trusts also use the TLC campaign to provide an entry level list of actions for teams.

5.0 Specialist sections

Specialist sections ensure that colleagues who don't work in a regular office environment can take part in Green Impact.

Catering

Outlets and service providers can use the catering tab to ensure that your organisations sustainability standards are applied across all areas. Teams who take part in the catering tab will be able to win catering awards from Bronze to Platinum. Green Impact have worked closely with the Soil Association to align the criteria with their Food for Life standards. Therefore, teams who complete Green Impact will find that they are also eligible to achieve the Soil Association accreditation mark.

Labs

Laboratories have very specific environmental impacts and therefore are key places to reduce resource consumption and engage users. Technicians, lecturers, PhD students and any working staff can all access and complete the toolkit. The section has been developed by sustainability in laboratory professionals from universities around the UK. This has ensured the actions are relevant, up to date and impactful.

Residences

Residences or accommodations tabs focus specifically on student housing on or off-campus. University owned as well as privately owned halls can all take part to improve sustainability practices. Staff are encouraged to hold events within the residences to expose students to positive behaviours, to positively

influence their actions. This is particularly important as students are often going through a 'moment of change' in their lives when they move into student accommodation and habits they form during this change will be long lasting.

Learning

Learning or academic sections are designed to engage academics on a variety topics, from waste reduction through to embedding sustainability within their academic courses and research. As academics have regular contact with students, encouraging them to take part in Green Impact can not only change their department, but also have a huge impact on students and their learning about sustainability and social justice issues, and their role in helping solve these challenges.

Green Impact is a bespoke programme and we are able to work with you to design sections to suit your organisation. Additional specialist organisations have developedinclude:

✓ Hair and beauty
✓ Front of house
✓ Grounds management
✓ Cleaning and portering
✓ Colleges

However, if there is an area of your organisation which is not covered by one of our current specialist areas, please contact your NUS Project Officer, who can help you design your bespoke actions.

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