# SDG Impact Assessment Tool

## GUIDE 1.0

GOTHENBURG CENTRE FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (GMV)

CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY | UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

DECADE OF ACTION

# Overview

The SDG Impact Assessment Tool is a free, online resource for research and educational institutions, companies, entrepreneurs, civic organisations, and public agencies to make self-assessments of impacts on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The tool is open for anyone to use and can help you to identify relevant sustainability perspectives of your work in a simple and structured approach. This is done by assessing an object's impact on each of the 17 SDGs as either direct positive, indirect positive, no impact, indirect negative, direct negative, or more knowledge needed. The tool encourages reflection and collaborative learning of the SDGs and the links between them.

This guide presents the tool and the steps of an SDG impact assessment. For your inspiration and guidance, some user examples and applications of the tool are described.

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**The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** pinpoint major challenges in areas such as poverty, health, education, equality, production and consumption, global warming, biodiversity, and safe, fair, and inclusive institutions.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, calls for sustainable transformation of societies across the globe [1]. This framework is one of the most ambitious and important global agreements in recent history. It challenges communities, industries, and governments at national and regional levels to change business-as-usual operations into more sustainable ones. The 17 SDGs pinpoint major challenges in areas as diverse as poverty, health, education, equality, production and consumption, global warming, biodiversity, and safe, fair, and inclusive institutions. As emphasised by UN, the interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are crucial for their implementation and therefore the SDGs should be treated as a 'whole'. This means that actions to achieve one SDG should avoid negative impacts on others. Put in practice, it means that there is no room to cherry-pick a subset of the SDGs by only describing positive impacts.

Sustainable transformation requires solutions to complex problems, which are often characterised by tradeoffs, subjective opinions, and lack of information. As the 2030 Agenda gains more attention, there is a growing need from stakeholders to take on this complexity and align their policies, business strategies, or research with the SDGs. The SDG Impact Assessment Tool offers an approach for research and educational institutions, companies, entrepreneurs, civic organisations, and public agencies to perform self-assessment of impacts on the SDGs.

## 1.2 About the SDG Impact Assessment Tool

The SDG Impact Assessment Tool helps you assess impacts from innovations, research activities, organisations, projects, and other initiatives onto the SDGs, hereafter called assessment objects or objects for short. With your own knowledge as a base, you will be able to identify positive impacts (opportunities), negative impacts (risks), and knowledge gaps. Detecting these knowledge gaps is a significant result in itself. In the end, you will have a better understanding of how your assessment object relates to the SDGs and be better equipped to prioritise actions ahead.

The tool stimulates a qualitative and reflective approach to identify SDG impacts. Given the complexity and broad scope of the 2030 Agenda, qualitative reasoning should not be underestimated as a valid approach to assess SDG impacts. That is not to say that the tool excludes quantitative data, if available. On the contrary, it is an excellent way to justify the identified impacts.

The design of the tool ensures that potential impacts on all SDGs are covered and discussed. This encourages users to avoid cherry-picking and green- or sustainability-washing. The approach is iterative, which reflects that sustainable development is an ongoing, continuous process. The most important outcome of an SDG impact assessment might not be the result as such, but rather the learnings and insights gained during the process.

### 1.3 Who is this guide for?

The SDG Impact Assessment Tool is generic and the SDGs concern us all. The tool is developed to be used by researchers, teachers, companies, agencies, municipalities, civil organisations or by anyone who has a project, activity or an organisation to assess. We target many different user groups with this guide.

**Researchers**
Broaden the scope of your research to include impacts on the SDGs. Identify the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. Highlight societal relevance in your research proposals.

**Teachers**
Use it in exercises where students work in smaller groups and evaluate an object relevant to the course, or in project work, evaluating a company or project.

**Innovation and business**
Get started evaluating SDG impacts, formulating strategic arguments and plans for the future business.

**Students**
Apply knowledge about the SDGs in a project work. Evaluate the SDG content in a course or program.

**Municipalties, regional or national authorities**
Facing a new investment or planning to make some changes? Make your strategic decisions based on the SDGs.

**By the way - it is also for you!**
Get to know the SDGs! Select something in your everyday life and try to identify which SDGs you think are relevant.

Tove Holm, Baltic Sea Challenge and Martin Eriksson, SDSN Northern Europe

**I applied the tool for assessing how the Baltic Sea Action Plan of Helsinki and Turku 2019-2023 affects the SDGs.**

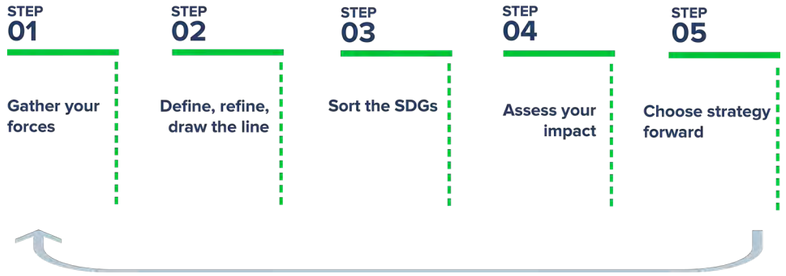
Tove Holm, Coordinator for the Baltic Sea Challenge at the City of Turku and the City of Helsinki

**The first step** encourages you to gather your forces. Agenda 2030 covers a wide range of topics. Don't hesitate to invite others to give second opinions or perform reviews of your assessment.



# 2. How to use the tool

We recommend using the SDG Impact Assessment Tool in an iterative five-step process.




**Follow the five-step process** to make the best use of the tool.

## 2.1 Step 1: Gather your forces

The SDGs spans over a wide range of topics and competencies. Therefore, it is recommended to use the tool in a workshop format. Being able to discuss complex questions together with others will help to clarify how your object of assessment relates to each of the SDGs. Remember to keep an open mind, a collaborative attitude, and a holistic view!

## 2.2 Step 2: Define, refine and draw the line

In the second step, you should provide a general description of the object that you want to assess. This description should provide relevant background information of the object so others can understand it.

It is important to clearly frame the scope of the assessment. This step aims to identify specific circumstances of the object, so it becomes relevant to discuss impacts on the SDGs. Provide a detailed description of the "who's, what's, when's, where's and how's" related to the object. An approach where "everything is linked to everything" and all conceivable impacts are included, should be avoided. In your framing try to consider the following:

- Requirements and dependencies for realising the object
- Assumptions made for the assessment
- Life-cycle perspectives
- Scale of implementation
- Geographical scope
- Time frame

Frequently, assessments are performed in a manner where the impacts of the object are compared to those of another scenario or a business-as-usual case. Information about such scenarios or business-as-usual cases should preferably also be included.

You can at any time go back and revise the framing and description of your object.

## 2.3 Step 3: Sort the SDGs

In the third step, you will sort the SDGs based on how you perceive their relevance to the object. This step aims to kick-start the discussions between you and your colleagues about the relations between the object and the SDGs. The tool presents the SDGs, one by one, where you are asked to decide whether they are relevant, not relevant, or if you simply don't know. Note that this sorting cannot be changed, but it does not affect the final result. In the next step, this enables you to start with the SDGs you find most or least relevant.

**Sort the SDGs** based on how you perceive their relevance. After the sorting, you can assess impacts on the SDGs in order of relevance.



## 2.4 Step 4: Assess your impact

In the fourth step, the SDG impact assessment is done. Reading through the targets can be of help to understand the content of individual SDGs. For every SDG, impacts from your object are categorised as:

- Direct positive impact
- Indirect positive impact
- No impact
- Indirect negative impact
- Direct negative impact
- More knowledge needed

To assess the impact on an SDG, the relevant cause-effect relations need to be considered and described. Such what-causes-what relations determines if an impact is positive or negative and direct or indirect. A positive impact help to implement the SDG and a negative impact counteract its implementation. A direct (positive or negative) impact will have an immediate one-step effect on an SDG. An indirect (positive or negative) impact is a secondary effect further down a chain of events.

To illustrate the difference between direct and indirect impacts, you can consider an assessment of digging a well and installing a water pump. This will give a direct positive impact on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) since access to clean water is increased. In turn, it will have an indirect positive impact on SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), since clean water contains less infectious agents and contaminants.

For each SDG, you need to motivate and explain the selected impact category. In the motivation text box, you provide reasoning, arguments, and support for your categorisation.

**Assess your impact** and select a category for each SDG. You should also motivate and explain why you selected that impact category.

Although you might identify several different impacts for an SDG, the tool only allows one impact categorisation. If an object has a positive (direct or indirect) impact on one target and a negative (direct or indirect) impact on another, you need to decide which of these impacts you consider to be the most important. Making such decisions can be difficult and depends on how you value and prioritise different impacts against each other. In these cases, we recommend that you document all types of impacts in the motivation text and clearly explain and motivate your decision.

**When you assess impacts** you might realise that the framing was not clear enough. Go back to Step 2 and complement the framing of the object.

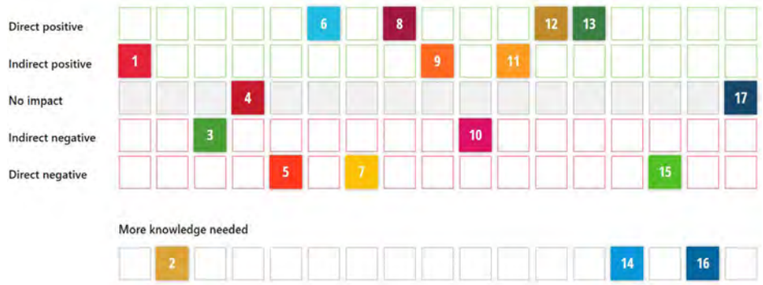
**The tool uses a qualitative approach** but each impact assessment must be motivated. Explain your reasoning by providing relevant arguments in a transparent and clearly understandable way. We encourage the use of quanitative data as basis for your assessment - where it is available.



If there is no relation between the object and the SDG, or if an impact is determined as negligible, the No impact category should be chosen. As you perform a self-assessment, it is you who decide if the impact is significant or negligible. Make sure to motivate your decision in the text box.

For some SDGs, you might not have enough knowledge to categorise an impact with reasonable confidence. If so, the category More knowledge needed should be chosen. Note that identifying knowledge gaps is equally important as identifying other impacts since it is impossible to make informed decisions with a high degree of uncertainty.

When you have finalised Step 4: Assess your impact, for all 17 SDGs, your result is visualised as a map of how your object impacts the SDGs.




**Visualisation of the results** from an SDG impact assessment. Impact categories are listed to the left and the impacts are shown as coloured squares with a number indicating the SDG. The impact category More knowledge needed is highlighted at the bottom of the figure.

## 2.5 Step 5: Choose strategy forward

The fifth step encourages you to formulate a strategy on how to make the object more sustainable. Based on the result, you can describe how to strengthen positive impacts and eliminate or minimise negative impacts. If you have identified knowledge gaps for specific SDGs, you can build new partnerships to fill those knowledge gaps. This step can be used as a steppingstone towards formulating a more comprehensive sustainability strategy.

As indicated in the figure on page 11, it is recommended to revisit an assessment in the light of new knowledge, experiences, or developments. Sustainable development is an ongoing, continuous process, motivating an iterative approach to SDG impact assessments.

## 2.6 Final remarks

Assessing impacts on the SDGs can open for many theoretical perspectives of sustainability. However, a pragmatic approach to SDG impact assessments is recommended. Ending up in a situation of "paralysis from analysis", where nothing can be assessed due to high demands of scientific data and evidence, or conclusions as "everything affects everything", will not move your sustainability work forward. On the other hand, making SDG impact assessments based on mere opinion is not recommended. A knowledge-based approach will make your assessment credible and useful.

You are encouraged to use the tool with common sense, provide reasoning for the presence or absence of impacts, and be transparent about the knowledge used for your impact categorisations.

**Sustainable development** is a continuous process where new knowledge and insights are gained over time. Returning to earlier assessments, and refining them in light of better understanding, is thus recommended.

**Choose a sustainable strategy forward.** By learning more about sustainable development, strengthening your positive impacts, and eliminating or minimising your negative impacts, you contribute to achieving the SDGs.

**Your SDG impact assessments are protected.** All data connected to your SDG impact assessments is stored encrypted.



# 3. Output and data protection

## 3.1 Output

All written input and categorisations of SDG impacts in the assessment are displayed and saved. At any time, you can log in to the website, open your assessments, and revise them. The results can be exported as a pdf-file, which includes:

- A graphical visualisation of your results (see the example in figure 4)
- Your object description (from Step 2 “Define, refine and draw the line”)
- Your motivations and explanations for impact categorisations (from Step 4 “Assess your impact”)
- Your description of how to make the object more sustainable (from Step 5 “Choose strategy forward”)

## 3.2 Data protection

You own your assessments and they are only accessible from your account. All data connected to your SDG impact assessments are stored with encryption. Hence, sensitive information, such as innovation ideas or corporate strategies, cannot be accessed by anyone but you as the user.

**Use the tool in education**, for example as a short exercise in a course or as part of a longer student project.



# 4. User scenarios

For your inspiration, we present some user examples in education, research, innovation and business, and strategic planning and decision making.

## 4.1 In Education

When students use the tool, they will learn about the SDGs themselves, the complexity of sustainable development, and the opportunities and difficulties of SDG implementation. Assessing SDG impacts in specific case studies enables teachers to apply the pedagogy of Problem Based Learning (PBL), which has been identified as a useful approach for teaching sustainable development [2,34]. Here we present two applications that we have tested.

### 4.1.1 Course exercise

**Description:** An exercise where students work in smaller groups and evaluate an object relevant to the course.

**Aim:** Learn about the SDGs and how the selected assessment object impacts the SDGs.

**Time needed:** Approximately three hours.

#### Instructions

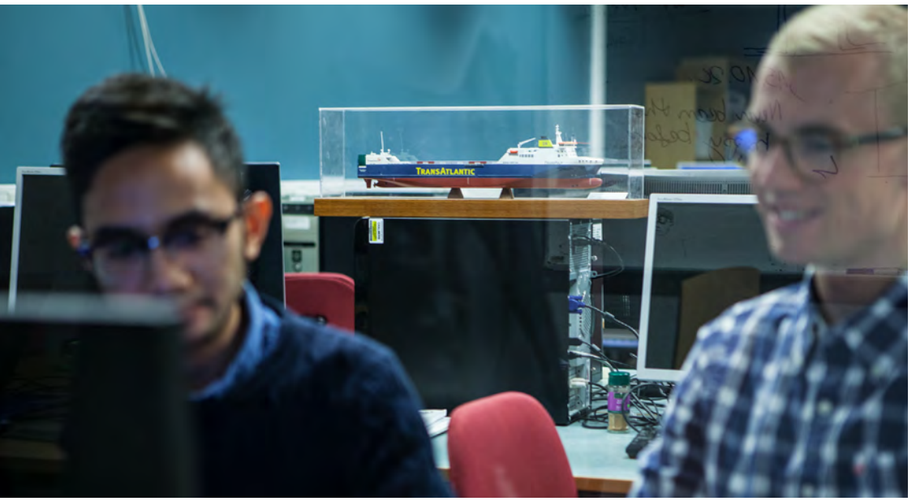
*Before the exercise*

- Decide on a relevant object to evaluate. For comparative purposes, we recommend using the same object for all groups. Remember to clearly frame the object of the assessment according to Step 2.
- Allow students to familiarise themselves with the SDGs for example by visiting the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool website.

*During the exercise*

- Present the aim of the exercise in class.
- Give a short introduction to the SDGs and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool in class.
- Present the object of the assessment and the framing.
- The three steps above shouldn't take more than about 20 minutes.
- Divide the students into small groups (recommended group size is 3-6 persons). Make sure each group creates at least one user account on the website.
- Allow the students to work in groups, assessing the SDG impacts from the object, for approximately two hours.
- Let the groups briefly present the SDG impacts they identified to the class. If there are many groups, they can select the four most interesting or important SDG impacts to present.
- Sum-up the exercise with a discussion where the groups' identified impacts are compared. We suggest focusing the discussion on why the groups have (potentially) identified different impacts, and how that relates to the complexity of sustainable development.

*Example:* In the course Environmental Impact Assessment (ES1401) given at the University of Gothenburg 2019, students evaluated how scenarios for a large-scale expansion of wind power in Sweden would impact the SDGs.




**Students from** Chalmers University of Technology have evaluated SDG impacts from companies within shipping and marine logistics.



### 4.1.2 Long-term project

**Description:** A project where students evaluate how a company (or other objects relevant to sustainable development) impacts the SDGs project, the students evaluate the sustainability of company operations or project.

**Aim:** Gain knowledge about the SDGs. Interact with stakeholders to learn how companies work with sustainable development and gather data to make an in-depth assessment of how their operations impact the SDGs. As a project output, the students will provide the companies with a transparent SDG impact assessment.

**Time needed:** Flexible, part-time during a half or full term.

#### Instructions

- Identify and establish contact with companies that are interested in having the sustainability of their operations evaluated by students. Explain the purpose and process of the project to the companies. Their input and interaction will be valuable throughout the project.
- Schedule a student introduction to the project and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool.
- Allow students to familiarise themselves with the SDGs, for example by visiting the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool website.
- Together with each student group and company, agree on what purpose the assessment will serve and clearly frame the assessment object according to Step 2.
- Let the students make an initial assessment.
- Arrange meetings where the student groups present their initial assessment and get feedback from the company and teacher(s)/supervisor(s). These meetings aim to clear any questions or misunderstandings.
- Based on the feedback, let the students revise the SDG impact assessments. Make sure that objectivity and scientific integrity is maintained.
- Let the student groups write a report and prepare a presentation of their work.
- Optional: Setup peer-review assignments among the student groups, so that they provide feedback on each other's assessments, reports, and presentations.
- Arrange a seminar where the student groups present the final assessments to the companies and teacher(s)/supervisor(s).

*Example:* In the course Towards Sustainable Shipping (SJO850) given at Chalmers University of Technology 2019, students evaluated SDG impacts from four companies within shipping and marine logistics.

**If you are a researcher**, the tool can help you to broaden the scope of your research projects and to extend your research consortium.

## 4.2 In Research

The tool can be used in research projects, to address how research outcomes impact the SDGs, or in research proposals, to map how the suggested research could impact the SDGs.

### 4.2.1 Linking research to the SDGs

**Description:** The tool can be used to broaden the scope of research to include relevant sustainability perspectives and guide scientific expertise to link different research fields. In a multidisciplinary approach, researchers can use the tool to identify knowledge gaps, negative and positive impacts, which can be expressed as risks and opportunities for stakeholders in society.

**Aim:** Broaden research to include potential impacts on the SDGs.

**Time needed:** This depends entirely on the purpose, scope, and ambition of the assessment.

#### Instructions

- Form a group of researchers that will perform the SDG impact assessment. Consider including collaborators with relevant knowledge about the object and the SDGs from both a theoretical and a practical viewpoint.
- Familiarise yourselves with the SDGs (e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform) and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool.
- In Step 2, frame the object so that it is relevant to discuss impacts on the SDGs. You need to consider under what circumstances the research outcomes could be realised in society, for example, by considering the geographical scale, time frame, preconditions needed, scale of usage and resource needs, and stakeholders involved.
- Knowledge as such does not have any impact on the SDGs. Impact arises when knowledge is utilised and put into practice. However, identifying and categorizing the impacts of research outcomes is not a trivial task. In Step 4, it might be useful to consider the circumstances in which impacts will occur ('context'), the underlying rationale and the cause-effect relationship linking the object to an SDG ('the mechanism'), and the potential size and range of impacts ('the magnitude').
- Try to reason, describe and document the level of confidence in your assessment.
- In Step 5, identified knowledge gaps can be used to inspire collaboration or novel research proposals.



*Example:* The MISTRA Carbon Exit research program aims to identify and analyse the technical, economic, and political opportunities and challenges for Sweden to reach the target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2045. The program includes case studies for energy carriers, buildings & transportation infrastructure, and transportation. The tool was used as a starting point to identify risks and opportunities from the three case study pathways to SDG implementation in Sweden and as international spillovers.

**With help of the tool**, a researcher can add arguments of societal relevance of the proposed research. The tool also supports a systematic evaluation of the SDGs and identification of the SDGs that a research proposal addresses.

### 4.2.2 In research proposals

**Description:** There is an increased interest from research councils and research funding organisations to support research that addresses the SDGs. Researchers can use the SDG Impact Assessment Tool to evaluate which SDGs their research proposals address and the potential SDG impacts the project will have. An SDG impact assessment can highlight the societal relevance of the proposed research.

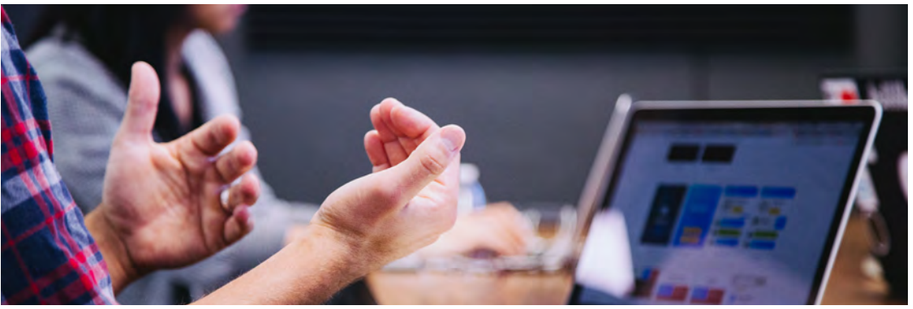
**Aim:** To describe potential impacts from research proposals on the SDGs.

**Time needed:** It depends on your ambition level but identifying and highlighting relevant SDGs in a research proposal could be done within two to three hours.

#### Instructions

- In this example, it is assumed that a research idea is formulated, a project consortium is in place and a draft proposal is written (corresponding to Step 1 and 2, respectively).
- Familiarise yourselves with the SDGs (e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform) and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool.
- Use Step 3 as a simple way to sort SDGs you find relevant for your research idea.
- Knowledge as such does not have any impact on the SDGs. Impact arises when knowledge is utilised and put into practice. Assess impacts on the SDGs based on how the results from your proposed research can be used in society.
- Step 5 can be used to broaden your research idea and/or improve the proposal, by addressing potential negative impacts.
- Consider adding your SDG impact assessment as an appendix to the proposal.

*Example:* The successful research proposal Predicting biological effects to enable minimizing and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification (SDG 14.3), funded by the Swedish research council Formas, was written to address one of the SDGs. Later on, the SDG Impact Assessment Tool was used to illustrate potential impacts from the suggested research on all SDGs.



**The tool is generic.** It doesn't matter if you are working with buildings, infrastructure, services, food or transportation.



### 4.3 In Innovation and business

**Description:** Moving from business-as-usual towards sustainability requires new innovations and business models. Currently, innovations and business models are rarely evaluated based on how they impact all the SDGs. The SDG Impact Assessment Tool offers an easy way to assess SDG impacts and formulate strategic arguments and plans for future businesses..

**Aim:** Evaluate how an innovation or a business model impacts the SDGs.

**Time needed:** A first SDG Impact Assessment will take at least three to four hours.

#### Instructions

- Invite colleagues or collaborators with relevant knowledge about the object and the SDGs to a workshop.
- Familiarise yourselves with the SDGs (e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform) and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool.
- In Step 2, frame the object and include the circumstances in which your innovation or business model will be used. Try to consider the geographical scale, time frame, scale of usage, and the preconditions and resources needed.
- Assess impacts on the SDGs from your innovation or business model. Keep your framing in mind, which determines how, when, and where impacts will occur.
- Use Step 5 to consider if the sustainability of your innovation or business model can be improved by addressing potential negative impacts. The SDG impact assessment may be used as a living document for planning, fundraising, and communication.
- Keep in mind that an SDG impact assessment is a self-assessment and is hence not a sustainability label of a product or service. By taking all the SDGs into account, the tool is instead a resource to transparently show how businesses impact the SDGs and stimulate sustainable innovation and business models, thereby avoiding greenwashing and similar misconduct.

*Example:* Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Northern Europe has evaluated SDG impacts from small-scale companies in the Solutions Initiative Forums . The companies taking part in the evaluations were selected based on their contributions to improve the status of Oceans (2017), Integration (2018), and Air Quality (2019). In parallel, a Solutions Report was written to each forum where external scientific reviews of the assessments were made.

### 4.4 In Strategic planning and decision making

**Description:** The structured approach of the SDG Impact Assessment Tool can guide organisations to align their strategic plans and decision making towards the SDGs. The tool can be used to identify relevant sustainability perspectives in an early phase of an organisations' strategic planning or to evaluate SDG impacts from existing strategic plans.

**Aim:** Identify potential SDG impacts resulting from strategic plans and decision making.

**Time needed:** This depends on the purpose, scope, and ambition of the assessment. A first SDG Impact Assessment will take at least three to four hours.

**Are you facing** a new investment or planning to make some changes? Municipalties and public agencies are some of the organisations that can find the tool useful for strategic planning and decision making.



### Instructions

- Identify key persons in your organisation that can contribute to an SDG impact assessment of your strategic planning and decision making.
- Familiarise yourselves with the SDGs (e.g. the UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform) and the SDG Impact Assessment Tool.
- In Step 2, you need to consider the scope of your assessment. A comprehensive strategy or an evaluation of strategic choices can be divided into different parts and assessed independently. The results can then be compared and give input to your strategic work.
- Direct and indirect impacts are normally defined as consecutive steps in a chain of events. However, when you assess strategic plans an alternative definition can be considered. Direct impacts could here be defined as those where your organisation has immediate responsibility, whereas indirect impacts from your organisation are dependent on decisions by other actors.
- Step 5 can be used to refine or revise strategic plans to minimise negative and strengthen positive impacts on the SDGs.

*Example:* Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden has signed the Climate Framework for Higher Education Institutions . The framework engages universities and university colleges in Sweden to support national and international commitments to reach the so-called 1.5°C target in the Paris Climate Agreement. The framework contains 13 key areas to reduce climate impact. Chalmers University of Technology used the SDG Impact Assessment Tool to evaluate SDG impacts from relevant key areas.

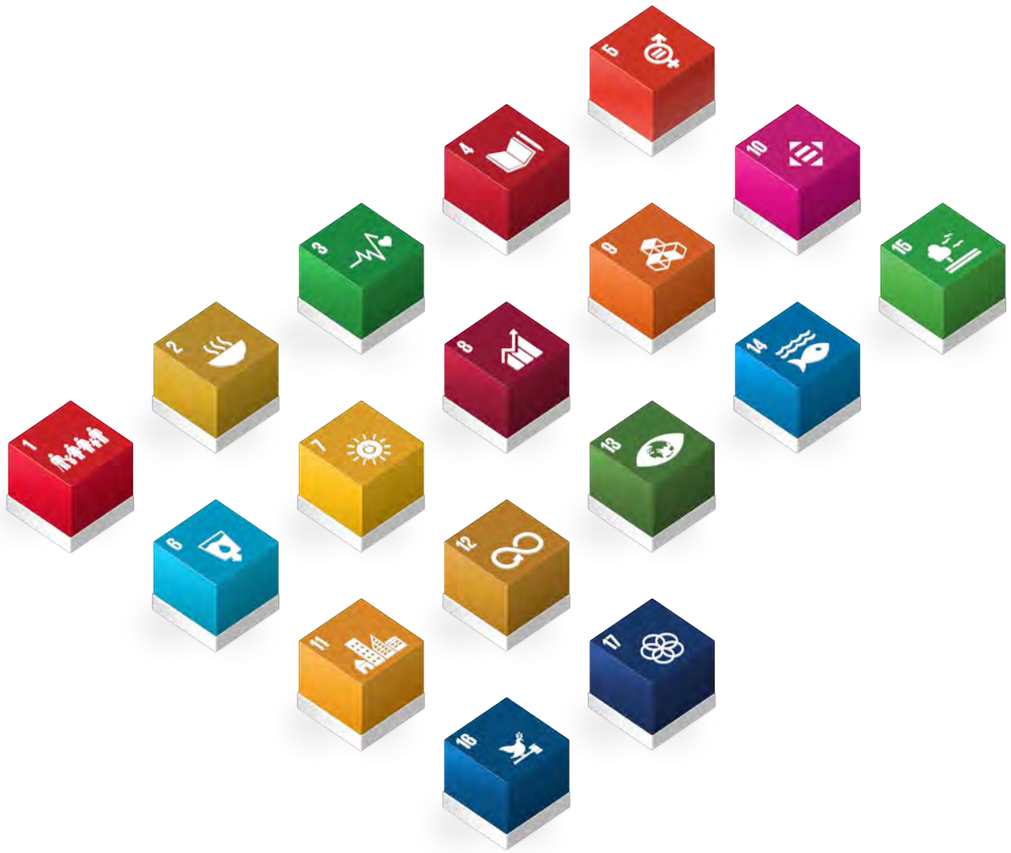
# Q&A

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| How much time do you need to go through all the steps in the tool? | The level of ambition primarily controls the time required. To be able to go through and briefly reflect on all SDGs, one should count on two hours. Deeper analysis can take significantly more time than that. |
| What competencies should be included when making an assessment? | A simple starting point is to reason in terms of the three dimensions of sustainable development: environment, economy, and social. The challenge is to reason about how these affect each other via the 17 global goals. |
| Why is it important to write an introductory text about one's evaluation? | It is important to describe the analysis object, both for your own sake and for others who are likely to take part in the analysis. It is particularly important to describe the boundaries for what is included in the analysis and not. As in all analyses, the choice of boundaries has direct consequences for the result. Thus, this should be devoted some time initially. |
| In what way can the tool help with our strategic work? | Through an SDG Impact Assessment, it is possible to identify relevant sustainability perspectives for your work and in what way they are relevant. In the tool, this is represented by impacts on the global goals either as positive or negative, directly or indirectly. Quite often, a first analysis needs to be supplemented by new knowledge. Detecting these knowledge gaps is a significant result in itself. Once this work is done, an organisation will be better equipped to contribute positively to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and sustainable development. |
| Why is the tool based on a qualitative and not quantitative self-estimation? | Measuring sustainable development in quantitative terms comes with a large set of challenges, not least how different perspectives (impact on SDGs) should be balanced or weighted against each other. Reasoning and trying to argue about what are relevant to sustainability perspectives is of great help and its importance should not be underestimated. That is not to say that the tool excludes quantitative elements when that type of data is available - it is excellent to justify an identified impact with the support of such data. |
| Is it possible to use data that we already have when we do our assessment? | Of course. Conducting an SDG Impact Assessment involves starting with the knowledge you already have and sorting it according to the global goals. |
| Can companies use the tool to evaluate their own business? | Yes, an SDG Impact Assessment is an excellent tool for building an understanding of how an organisation can potentially influence and contribute to the achievement of the Global Goals. However, it can be a challenge for larger organisations with several parallel business areas. Then the analysis should be divided into appropriate sections, where each section constitutes its assessment. |
| In what ways have universities used the tool? | A university's activities can be somewhat generalised into the areas: education, research, and utilisation/collaboration. The tool has been successfully applied in all these areas. In education as an element of courses, in research to relate a research group or research area to the Global Goals, and in utilisation/collaboration as a tool to identify the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. |
| I will be holding a workshop where we will use the tool. What do I need to think about? | Read the instructions on the tool's website and contemplate the content! Set aside enough time, try to mix participants with different skills as far as possible, and try to create a permissive atmosphere - initially there are no 'right' or 'wrong'. Don't spend too much time on each goal. See it as an ongoing process where you continue to develop each time you do an assessment. |
| Can we use this tool in our country? | The tool is freely available for everyone to use, globally! |



# Q&A

| Question | Answer |
|---|---|
| I want to evaluate a new product. How can I think? | To evaluate what we mean by a product in the classical sense, that it is something that is disseminated and used by others in society to satisfy a need, the context for the use needs to be described. We sometimes call this the "impact scenario", which means that the circumstances for the product to be spread and used should be specified. For example, where will the product be used, by whom, and to what extent? Does the use depend on something else having to happen - should that be part of the evaluation? Will the use result in side effects? Answering these questions will help find a reasonable boundary for the evaluation. |
| I work as an environmental/ sustainability coordinator within a city or municipality and would like to test the tool. How can I think? | Try to find a reasonably limited part of the activities you are involved in to test out. Maybe you are facing a new investment or planning to make some changes? Gather a small group of colleagues and test the tool to try to identify risks and opportunities, and then consider how the outcome can be strengthened. Start by talking about the potential impact as openly and broadly as possible to tune down to the most relevant elements as you go along. |
| I am a student and would like to test the tool. How can I think? | As a student, there may be several reasons for conducting an SDG Impact Assessment. It is also an easy way to familiarise yourself with the Agenda 2030 framework and the 17 Global Goals, as a learning exercise. One way to use the tool is to conduct a sustainability assessment as part of a project in a course or program. Another way is to evaluate the content of a course - a way to match the content of the teaching in a course towards the Global Goals. Doing an SDG Impact Assessment with fellow students is a great way to spur an in-depth discussion on sustainable development based on a concrete example. How an analysis object should be defined, what do we mean by 'impact', how we distinguish between direct and indirect effects, and the extent to which our values play a role, are all useful challenges to consider! |
| I am a teacher and would like to test the tool in my teaching. How can I think? | In particular, we see two relevant uses for the tool in teaching: as a shorter element - a workshop - where students test the tool on clearly defined objects with the primary goal of learning more about the Global goals and getting a clue as to how they can be used in reality. Alternatively, as a tool in a larger project work where the focus is on performing a deeper sustainability analysis and where the result is of greater importance. Here, students will need guidance on how the analysis objects can be appropriately defined, how to distinguish between direct and indirect impact given the motive and purpose of the analysis, and with what level of ambition the impact should be described. |
| I am a private person and would like to test the tool to learn more about sustainable development. How can I think? | Step one may be to just look through the tool, read through each SDG, and try to build a sense of what perspectives are being raised. The next step may be to select an item in your everyday life, work, or something you have been thinking about in society and try to identify which SDGs you think are relevant. Maybe you have someone in your acquaintance who you can then test your conclusions on? Sustainable development is rarely black or white, and what is ultimately considered to be important is usually guided by your values. |
| Is there any support in conducting the assessment? | The tool is very easy to use. There are full instructions on the website of the tool. At this point, we cannot provide support. |





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The tool is available at SDGImpactAssessmentTool.org.

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The provider of the SDG Impact Assessment Tool takes no responsibility for the use of the resulting assessments.

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