

What is a Job in Sustainability?

Understanding (1)

Defining sustainability is complicated (see Preparing (1) to read our explanation), and properly defining a 'job in sustainability' may actually be more so. Throughout this guidance a 'job in sustainability' will mean a job which overlaps the environmental, social and economic boundaries, and has either a strong environmental or social justice dimension.



You do not have to be working on renewable energy or on forestry projects to have a job in sustainability. All the examples of sustainability issues above are touched upon by a wide range of job roles and types, and that is by no means a complete list of work areas which fall within sustainability as a concept.

Variations in Jobs in Sustainability

Sustainability jobs can be sought by individuals because of a **value** the jobseeker holds (an administrator may really care about the social and environmental regeneration of their local area and so wanted to work for a company promoting this), or a **knowledge base** they have (through a degree in a sustainability-related subject or previous experience) – or both. This guide focusses on working within organisations but entrepreneurship is also a huge area of potentially working with sustainability and addressing issues through self-driven innovation.

Jobs in sustainability can have sustainability as the **core focus**, a **main responsibility**, or a **small aspect** of the role. Sustainability may not come into their role at all, and may just be an important part of their **organisation's vision and mission**. An administrator working for a regeneration charity and a sustainability manager for a standard footwear production company both have 'jobs in sustainability'. Sustainability jobs occur in every **sector** – private companies, public bodies, education and research, charities etc. It is up to individual jobseekers to decide in which sector(s) they would feel comfortable.

There are jobs in sustainability which involve almost any **skill or training** you could imagine. It is important to consider what skills you have, and which you would like to develop on the job or through further study. Jobs in sustainability are available at all levels, for school leavers, graduates, and those already working. Different roles require extremely different core skills and knowledge, although all will require a basic understanding of sustainability and why it matters to the organisation. Read more about skills in the Preparing section of this Guide. Most jobs in sustainability have a **focus area**, which may be one of those in the word cloud above or something completely different. Non-specific sustainability jobs do exist (sustainability officers or consultants, for example), but generally then the organisation's activities or mission will dictate their focus.

If you are interested in working in this area, but you aren't exactly sure in what role or organisation, then looking at examples of job profiles from people working in sustainability would be a good next step.



If you haven't already done so, we suggest you [watch EAUC-S Careers Webinar 1](#) which introduces a number of people and asks them to explain why they consider themselves to have a 'job in sustainability', and the realities of working within this field.

Video Profiles

A large number of organisations encourage people with particular jobs within sustainability to produce written and video profiles. These are a great way to find out about different job roles, why the post-holder chose them, and how they got there – and to figure out if any might be of interest to you.

Top Tip: Sustainable jobs are rarely explicitly labelled, but it is worth trying search terms such as 'sustainable', 'sustainability', 'environmental', 'social responsibility' if you are looking for a non-specific job in this area. See our *Winning* section of these Guides for more information and tips when searching for jobs.

iCould - Video Profiles

iCould have a large range of [career videos](#), you can search these by subject, job type, or life decision (such as a hobby, changing career, wanting to start your own business etc.). Almost all the subject topics could feature a job with sustainability aspects, although Environment, Energy and Utilities, Civil Service, Politics and Local Government, Science, and Charities and Community Work may be a good place to start. You can also search for 'sustainability' or other interest areas on the [career videos main page](#).

Some interesting examples are:

- [Head of Sustainability for Lend Lease in the UK](#) (Property)
- [Sustainability Advisor with Halcrow](#) (Engineering)
- [Principle Consultant – Climate Change for the Met Office](#) (Climate Science and Communications)
- [Campaign Director for The Student Switch Off](#) (Communications)
- [Ethical Trade Manager at Boden](#) (Procurement / Retail)
- [Community Ranger for the Forestry Commission](#) (Education and Engagement)
- [Project Developer for E.ON Climate and Renewables](#) (Wind Farm Development)

Text Profiles

Prospects - Text Profiles

[Prospects](#) have a wide range of text-based [career profiles](#) providing a lot of detail, including a large section under [Environment and Agriculture](#) where many stray into sustainability, as do those under [Energy and Utilities](#) and [Public Services and Administration](#). Jobs within Social Care and other categories may also be of interest depending on your focus.

Other Websites

[Target Jobs](#) are similar to Prospects, also listing all the jobs you can go through as well as allowing you to select an area to focus on. There is no mention of sustainability so you will need to search for a related subject or your focus (e.g. environment, conservation, waste).

[The National Careers Service for the UK](#) also provides outlines for a large number of job options.

Profiles of Sector or Organisation Specific Roles

[Lantra](#) is the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector, and their website has careers sections for a range of industries, including routes into various careers in them.

The **EAUC** ran a feature called [Meet a Member](#) on people working within the further and higher education sector with jobs in sustainability as academic and support staff.

The roles and companies offering jobs in sustainability are extremely varied, and constantly changing in response to changes in legislation and the business and funding environment.

A Growing Sector

Businesses and organisations are beginning to realise the importance of sustainability, responding to changes in regulation, public pressure and other business risks, as well as to new opportunities. The number of people working in sustainability is increasing, for 3 main reasons:

1. Existing businesses are employing people specifically to focus on sustainability and identify necessary changes in operations to minimise sustainability risks and harness any opportunities.
2. A growing number of 'normal' roles are taking responsibility for monitoring, reporting and managing factors within the sustainability agenda as part of their regular duties.
3. New businesses and organisations are being founded in response to opportunities linked to the sustainability agenda, with the formation of new sustainability-focused job roles.

Businesses Need Skills in Sustainability

The [Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment](#) (IEMA) has done research into the skills required for a sustainable economy, and has found that investment in developing organisational capacity and skills to tackle the sustainability challenge is lagging behind investment in other skills. Their "[Skills for a Sustainable Economy: preparing for the perfect storm](#)" campaign aims to highlight this issue and catalyse action through work with businesses and government.

Research has shown that employers believe a range of skills for sustainability to be important when considering the recruitment of recent graduates, and so developing a level of sustainability literacy should be a priority for current students and new graduates. For example, see the results of a survey on employer attitudes by the Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE), Change Agents UK and National Union of Students [here](#).

Due to the increase in regulation, public pressure and link to business risk, it is likely that in the future every job will include sustainability responsibilities. In some organisations this is already the case, but many have a sustainability or corporate social responsibility officer or department. As the number of jobs involving sustainability will continue to grow, an understanding of sustainability ideas and how they intersect with business priorities such as resource efficiency and PR will be a bonus for any role.



If you haven't already done so, we suggest you [watch EAUC-S Careers Webinar 2](#) which explores the range of skills businesses are looking for and why sustainability is important to business.

Head to our next section of the Careers Guide—[Preparing...](#)