# A guide to Green Impact projects


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This guide gives an overview of where to start and how to gain the various award levels for a Green Impact (GI) project.

# What is a GI Project?

A GI project provides the flexibility to choose what sustainability means to your team by working on a topic that you have a particular interest in, or that tackle a specific sustainability issue you face in your workplace. You don't have to take on a Project, but it provides an alternative (or an addition to) completing the actions;  it gives you the opportunity to take on something a bit different if you would like!

# How does it work?

1) Teams can achieve a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum award by *either* completing the actions in the toolkit (as in previous years) OR completing a project. You don't need to do both (but you are welcome to work towards two awards if you want!).
2) If opting for a Project, teams design and implement their sustainability projects over the year.
3) Teams complete a Project Plan to establish what area they want to focus on and agree with the Sustainability Team what level their project will be awarded at.
4) Once the project is complete a Case Study for the project needs to be completed to summarise what was done and the main outcomes. This should be uploaded to the toolkit with the project plan before the deadline in April. Templates for both the plan and the case study documents are available here.

Your Project Plan will set out exactly what the outcomes & outputs are for the project (what you hope to achieve and how you will achieve it). Please use the template and send to GreenImpact@york.ac.uk before starting to ensure it is suitable and will achieve the award level you expect.  We will check the project plan and make any necessary comments and advise that you can proceed with your project.

Upload the plan to the toolkit once finalised.

Your Case Study should be written after the project is complete (but before the submission deadline) and should include a project title, explanation of your projects aims, outputs and outcomes as well as any pictures, graphs or charts you would like to add. Please use the template and upload this on the toolkit on or before the submission deadline.

Additional requirements - a one or two page summary which we can use on the website and for promoting the GI projects to others throughout the following year.

# Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum Project criteria

The different award levels reflect the impact and effort of the project. You should decide which level you are going for before you begin, bearing in mind your capacity and resources:

| Criteria | Bronze | Silver | Gold | Platinum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Impact:** where is the impact of your project seen? | Project makes an impact on our department only | Project makes an impact on the wider University beyond our department | Project makes an impact on the wider University beyond our department | Project makes an impact on the wider community, beyond our University |
| **SDGs:** how many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals does your project contribute towards? | One or more | Two or more | Three or more | Four or more |
| **Outcomes:** how many outcomes does your project have that can be measured (or reasonably estimated)? | One or more | Two or more | Three or more | Four or more |
| **Lasting legacy**: does your project have a lasting impact beyond the academic year? For example, a sensory garden that will remain and continues to be tended by staff/students. | Project has an impact within this academic year only | Project has an impact within this academic year only | Project has a lasting legacy beyond this academic year and will continue to have an impact in the future. | Project has a lasting legacy beyond this academic year and will continue to have an impact in the future. |
| **Alignment with Sustainability Plan:** is your project directly supporting the targets within the University's sustainability plan? | No direct link required, but encouraged | No direct link required, but encouraged | Linked to the overarching mission or goals within the plan, but not to specific targets | Directly supporting specific targets within the plan |
| **Replicability:** is your project replicable to some extent, either by another team at UoY, or at another organisation? | Project does not necessarily need to be replicable | Project should be replicable to some extent by other teams at UoY, or beyond | Project should be replicable to some extent by other teams at UoY, or beyond | Project should be replicable AND you have provided resources and guidance to support other teams to replicate this |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reach and collaboration:** are you working with others outside of your direct team to achieve your project's aims? | Collaboration is encouraged, but not a requirement | Collaboration is encouraged, but not a requirement | Collaboration is encouraged, but not a requirement | Actively collaborating with others outside of our team to implement the project - such as students, community groups, another University etc. |

# How will you be audited?

Auditors will review your project as part of the audit to ensure it meets the criteria of the award level you are going for. They will need to see your completed Project Plan and Case Study for (find the templates here). They may ask questions about the documents and the projects or ask to view elements of the project in-person, where possible.

# Deadlines & Timeline

## Project Plan(s) submission deadline:

Send your Project Plan to GreenImpact@york.ac.uk, the sooner the better, so you have plenty of time to implement your project. We recommend by 30th November 2025.

## Toolkit submission deadline:

Submit your toolkit (including completed Project Plan & Case Study) by 25th April 2025

## Audits:

7th May 2025 – please book this afternoon out in your diary as soon as possible to ensure your availability.

## Green Impact Awards

June 2025, exact date to be confirmed.

# Further Information & guidance

We're here to help! Contact GreenImpact@york.ac.uk or Rachel.Soper@sos-uk.org at any time with questions, suggestions or queries. Or pop your question on our Slack channel #green-impact.

# Q & A

## Q. How do we decide what project to do?

A. The project you choose will depend very much on what your operations are – what does your team do day-to-day and where are your biggest environmental impacts? You might also have other ideas from your own passions and interests. The first step is to map your team's biggest negative sustainability impacts and gather ideas from your team on how a project could help to address these. You can also think about the questions below to help you get started:

1. How is our work harming the environment, and how can we reduce this?
2. How will our work be affected by climate change, and how can we build resilience against this?
3. How can we engage others (staff and students) with sustainability?
4. How can we drive sustainability solutions?
5. How can we support our staff and students to practice sustainability in their work or home life?

If you're still unsure, get in touch to discuss ideas!

## Q. How do projects differ from the individual actions in the original toolkit?

A. Projects are bigger tasks than the original toolkit actions. For instance, having energy awareness stickers in the office would not in itself constitute a project. However, performing an energy audit, giving a series of short talks on energy efficiency, running an awareness campaign and showing energy savings and behaviour change as a result of these actions would constitute a project.

## Q. Can we complete the toolkit actions as in previous years?

A. Yes you can, but projects are an alternative to the criteria and you don't need to complete any toolkit actions to get your award if you complete a project. There is nothing to stop you achieving a project award *and* an action-based award using the toolkit criteria if you are feeling ambitious!

## Q. Can I still complete projects if I am from a specialist team (i.e. Labs)?

A. Yes! You can complete projects specific to your environment, for example reducing pipette tip waste in a lab environment. The projects are very flexible and applicable to any workplace so you can design a project that tackles your own unique sustainability issues.

## Q. Can I complete a project if I am a new team this year?

A. Yes! Any team can do a project. If you are a brand new team you may want to look through the toolkit criteria as well to make sure you are meeting some of the basics of sustainability, but you are more than welcome to implement your own project for your first Green Impact award.