



Finance Sector: Sustainability/CSR Assessment Tool

The last decade has witnessed a significant uptake of sustainability/corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives within the finance sector. However, many financial institutions now want to take stock of where they have come from and where they intend on going in this area. As part of this exercise a common question is being asked: **Do we have the necessary policies and strategies to move forward on the pathway towards sustainability and more socially responsible business practices?** Our *Sustainability/CSR Assessment Tool* is specifically designed to assist financial institutions answer this important question.

Assessment Indicators: At the heart of the tool lies a comprehensive set of core indicators (over 70 in total) against which the adequacy of a financial institution's sustainability/CSR policies and strategies is assessed. To ensure these indicators are aligned with current 'best practice' and stakeholder expectations, they have been cross-referenced with ten internationally recognized guidelines and standards in the area of sustainability and CSR. These include several high profile initiatives that focus specifically on the financial services sector.

Indicators: Major Areas of Coverage

- Integrated Management
- Labour
- Environment
- Human Rights
- Anti-Corruption
- Community
- Product Responsibility



Cross-Referenced With:

- United Nations Global Compact
- Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Guidelines (including the financial services supplement)
- Dow Jones Sustainability Index Series Assessment Criteria
- ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy
- OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises
- FTSE4Good Index Series Inclusion Criteria
- United Nations Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights
- World Economic Forum, Partnering Against Corruption Initiative
- The Equator Principles
- UNEP Statement by Financial Institutions on the Environment and Sustainable Development



“Our assessment tool will assist companies design the policies and strategies necessary to move forward on the pathway towards sustainability.”

Flexibility: The assessment is built around a set of core indicators with general application. However, the tool can also be adapted to meet specific needs and circumstances. For example, additional sector-specific codes of conduct, standards or guidelines can be examined upon request with a view to increasing the scope and coverage of indicators used in the assessment.

Assessment Process: Our team carries out the assessment by examining a company’s existing policies and strategies and comparing them to the predefined indicators. The focus of our examination will be on the company’s annual report, sustainability/CSR report (if available), website material and internal codes, policies and procedural manuals. Interviews with key personnel will also be conducted where appropriate.

Final Report: The findings of the assessment are presented in a final report which clearly identifies where the company’s strengths lie and any gaps in policy and strategy. If gaps are identified, recommendations will be made on how to strengthen the corporation’s approach in those areas.

Benefits: The tool is designed to be of benefit for financial Institutions at different stages in the development of their sustainability/CSR programs. For those just starting out, the findings of the assessment will help to identify a clear road map forward. For those more advanced, the assessment is an opportunity to identify and remedy any gaps in their approach whilst providing a snap shot of their overall performance with reference to ten internationally recognized guidelines and standards in this area.

About Natural Advantage

Natural Advantage has the experience to meet the needs of businesses, industry associations, government enterprises and non-government organizations in the fast evolving areas of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

We provide services to enterprises with operations in Canada, United States, Europe and Australia. Our mission is to assist enterprises realize value from economic, environmental and social integration. To learn more about us and our team, visit our website at www.naturaladvantage.ca

Want More Information About the Assessment Tool?

Please contact Michael Kerr, Natural Advantage’s senior consultant, on 1 514 7481260 or mkerr@naturaladvantage.ca

Special Note: This assessment tool is not currently designed for the purpose of carrying out a targeted audit of a company’s performance against any one or more of the ten international guidelines or standards identified above. Specific audits of this nature can be carried out independently or built into the assessment tool upon request. Further, the use of these international guidelines and standards is for cross-referencing only and should not be construed as an affiliation between Natural Advantage and the issuing organisations.
