



Sustainability Made Simple

A Blueprint for Building Your Sustainability Plan



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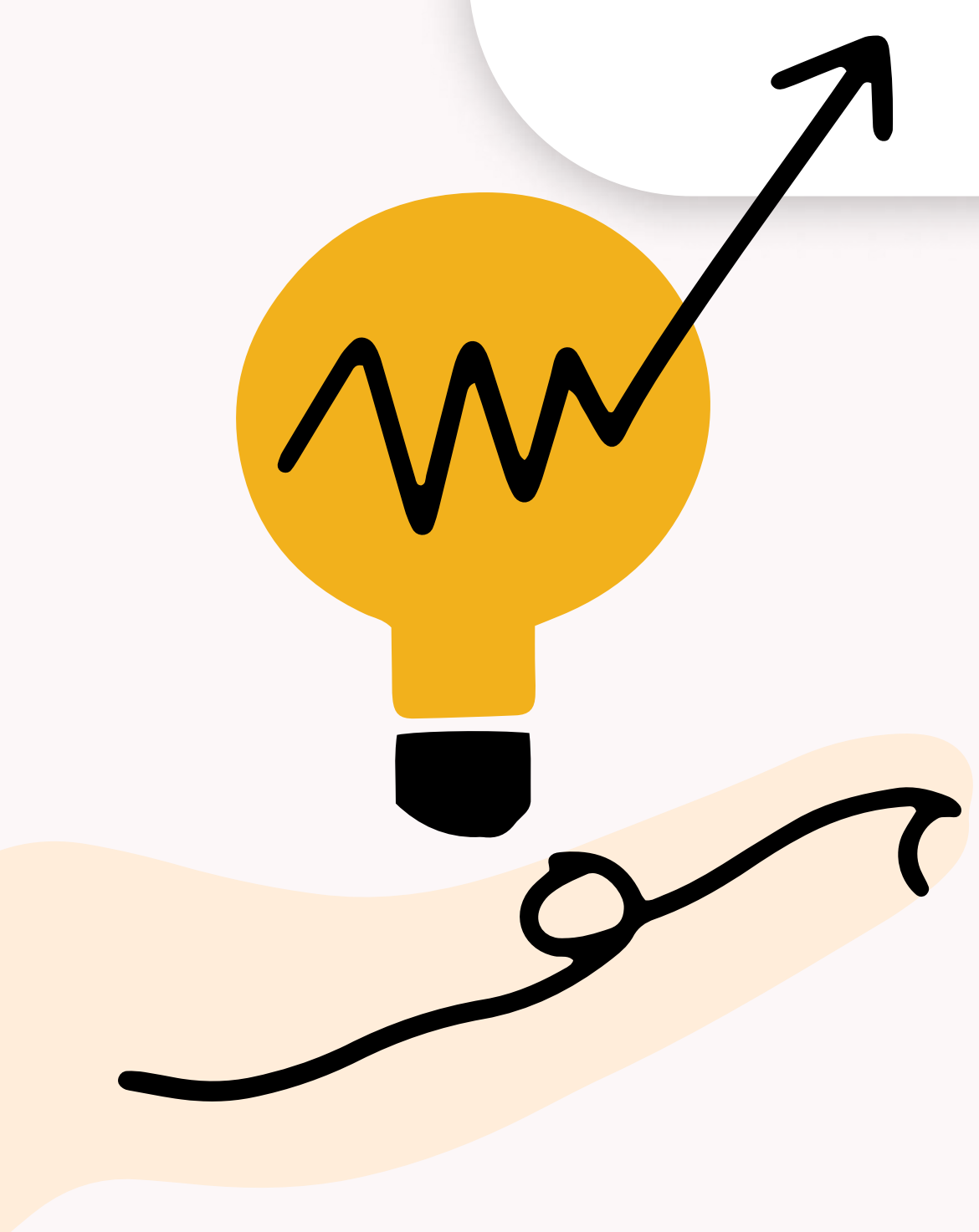
Building a Lasting Impact

Introduction

A comprehensive sustainability plan is essential for long-term business success. It helps your business strike a balance where you thrive while also caring for our planet by reducing waste, diverting materials from landfills, making smarter resource choices, and conserving energy.

By prioritizing sustainability, you'll see cost savings from reduced operational waste, lower landfill fees and, if you're buying carbon offsets, you'll likely need to purchase fewer. A commitment to sustainability also enhances brand reputation, attracting the growing number of environmentally conscious customers. And improved ESG scores are increasingly important to investors.

In this guide, you'll learn how to conduct a waste audit, set SMART sustainability goals, develop actionable plans, and measure and continuously improve your progress.



Your Starting Point: Conducting a Waste Audit

Getting Started

There's always room to improve how we manage and reduce the waste we send to landfills.

The EPA estimates that about **75%** of waste produced in the U.S. is recyclable, yet the national recycling rate has plateaued at around **34% since 2010**.

That's both a problem and an opportunity
to make a difference.

Think of a waste audit as a fact-finding mission. It gives you the full picture of your waste streams. You will evaluate the effectiveness of your current waste program, discover areas for improvement, and get data-backed insight to support creating dedicated recycling programs.



To prepare for the waste audit, answer these **questions** about your operation:

- 1** What is currently happening with your waste stream?
- 2** Are there regulatory risks for improper handling or is there a general objective to improve sustainability?
- 3** What waste byproducts does your operation produce and how are they managed?
- 4** What waste collection points and methods are currently in place?
- 5** What materials are currently being diverted/recycled?

Identify what you know today, and what you want to learn from the audit. A mind-mapping exercise can be a useful tool to help you identify and organize primary components of your waste streams and byproducts – and uncover high-priority areas to investigate.



Tip: Stay open to new discoveries, the audit may reveal previously unknown weaknesses that offer your biggest opportunities for improvement.

The Waste Audit Process

Engaging a professional service that specializes in waste removal and sustainability to conduct your waste audit ensures that best practices are followed, providing you with objective, accurate data and expert insights to maximize your results.

An audit includes the following steps:



1

The audit can be conducted with the waste in one full dumpster, or it can include collecting everything in your waste containers on multiple days, just prior to your regularly scheduled pickup. It depends on your business and your goals. Collect enough volume to get a representative sample of your waste stream.



2

Sort materials into primary categories. Examples include cardboard, paper, plastic, organics, textiles, and municipal solid waste (MSW).



3

Count and weigh all materials. Analyze the breakdown of materials by weight and percentage of total volume to determine the biggest contributors to your waste stream.



The Waste Audit Process



**Assess
Performance**



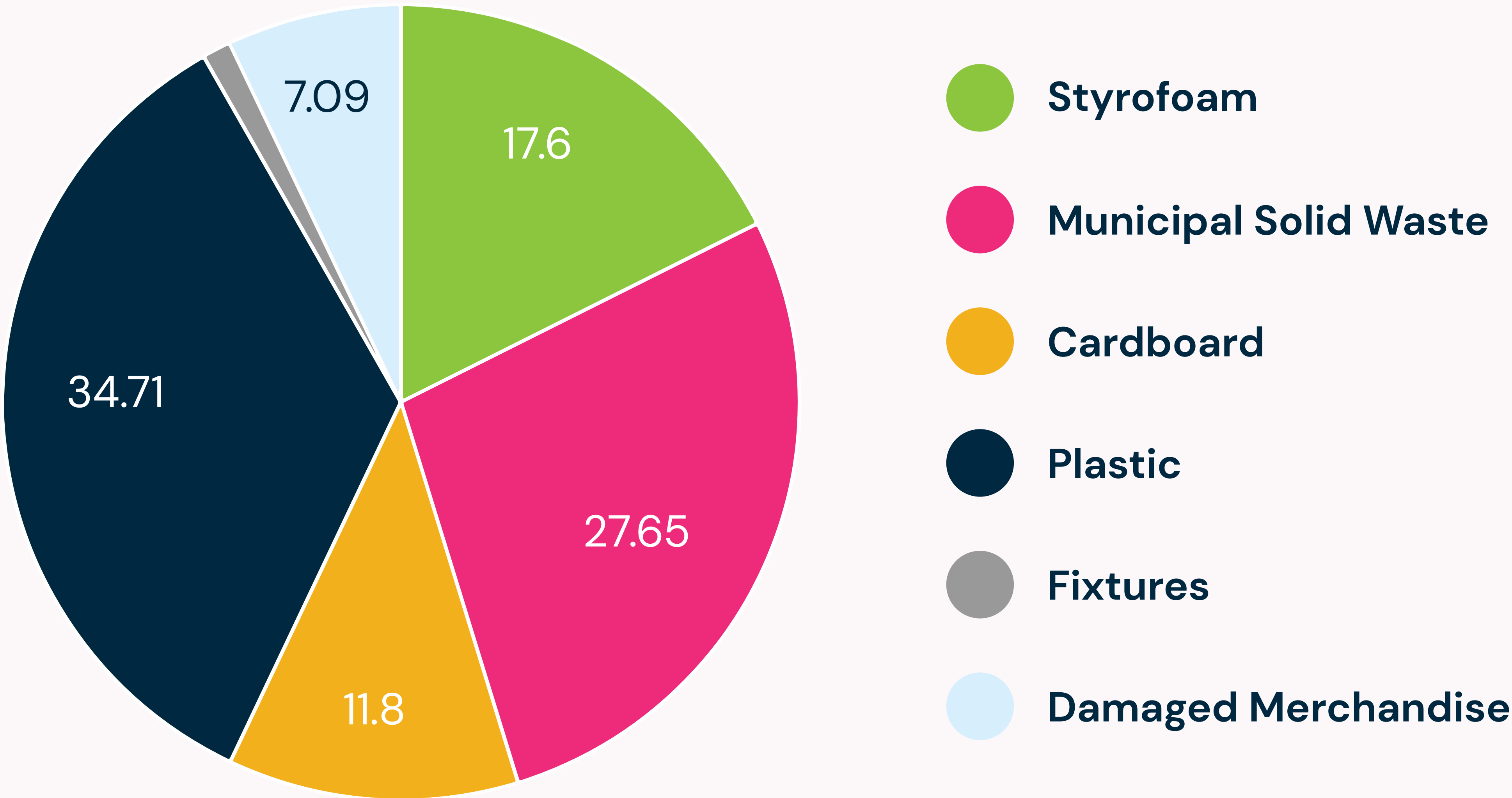
Compile the data to assess current program effectiveness.



**Identify
Opportunities for
Improvement**



Your largest waste streams offer the biggest opportunity to build standalone recycling programs. The audit also identifies improperly handled materials. It may uncover a large volume of recyclable cardboard in landfill or containers, or items contaminated by materials like organic waste, making them non-recyclable. Improper disposal of e-waste or cleaning supplies can put you at risk of fines.



Armed with the data-driven insights from your waste audit, you can set meaningful goals to guide your landfill diversion efforts and enhance your overall sustainability strategy.

Setting Your Sustainability Goals

To maximize results, align your sustainability goals with your business strategy. The integration ensures that sustainability is a fundamental part of company operations, rather than an isolated initiative. It also positions you as a forward-thinker in the industry.

Define SMART Goals to Maximize Results

Use SMART goals to build impactful initiatives you can track, measure, and easily communicate.

SMART goals are:



Working with a sustainability company gives you a big advantage when setting SMART goals. They bring expertise and innovation to drive out-of-the-box ideas and solutions.

Setting Your Sustainability Goals

Include Key Stakeholders in the Goal-Setting Process

Engage the right people, which may include company leadership, employees, customers, and/or suppliers, depending on your goals. Involve them early in the process, through kickoff meetings or surveys. Gathering input builds consensus and support and ensures your goals hit all the right points.

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Questions to Ask

Company Leadership

What specific sustainability outcomes are most important for our company's long-term success?

What resources (financial, human, technological) will you allocate to our initiatives?

What are your priorities for reducing waste and improving recycling within our operations?

What metrics and KPIs would you like us to use to measure success?

Employees

How can we make it easier for employees to participate in our sustainability efforts?

How can we reduce waste and increase recycling in your department?

What ideas do you have for promoting a culture of sustainability within our company?

How can we better educate and engage employees about our sustainability goals?

Setting Your Sustainability Goals

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Questions to Ask

Customers

What environmentally friendly practices do you value most in the companies you support?

What specific sustainability initiatives would you like to see our company implement?

What information about our sustainability efforts would you find most valuable?

How do our current sustainability practices influence your decision to purchase from us?

How can we better communicate our sustainability efforts to you?

Suppliers

How can we collaborate to enhance our environmental impact?

What certifications or standards do you adhere to in terms of sustainability?

What new materials or processes can we use to reduce waste or improve recycling?

How can we work together to ensure our supply chain is as sustainable as possible?

Do you provide Scope 3 emissions data as part of your service?

Establish Ongoing Communication Channels to **Build Momentum**

Putting the right communication channels in place encourages collaboration and feedback. It gives team members a way to flag issues quickly, celebrate wins, and keep your initiatives on track. Customize the channels based on your audience and program goals. Consider these examples:

- 1 Plan regular sustainability core team meetings** to keep everyone informed and aligned.
- 2 Hold monthly or quarterly meetings** to review progress with employees and leadership.
- 3 Send monthly email updates** to customers.
- 4 Publish annual sustainability reports** for the community and investors.
- 5 Create KPI dashboards** for at-a-glance reporting and to keep initiatives top-of-mind.



Developing Your Sustainability Plan

Determine the Resources Needed






Develop a resource plan that keeps your sustainability initiatives feasible and effective. Consider your internal team's skills and availability. For example, employees may need to manage recycling bins, conduct training sessions, and monitor progress.

Next, identify any external resources. This could include waste removal and sustainability experts with partnerships to expand your access to recycling facilities, as well as a technology solution to track, manage, and optimize your landfill diversion efforts.

Actions and Timelines

An effective sustainability plan requires clearly defined objectives, actionable steps, realistic timelines, and clearly assigned roles and responsibilities. Use your **SMART** goals to break your initiatives into actionable steps.

If your **SMART** goal is tied to increased recycling, actions might include:

-  Setting up more accessible recycling bins.
-  Providing training sessions for employees on proper recycling practices.
-  Partnering with a local recycling facility to ensure proper waste handling.
-  Engaging suppliers early in the product cycle to ensure recycling is considered when planning purchases and projects.
-  Identifying a waste partner that can accommodate your recycling material, whether the volume fits in a mail-back program box or is picked up by the truckload.

Developing Your Sustainability Plan

Timelines create a sense of urgency and keep the project moving forward.

For example:



Set a one-month timeline for setting up new recycling bins.



Allow six weeks for conducting training sessions.



Schedule ongoing check-in points for monitoring and adjusting the recycling program based on performance results.

Best Practices for Building and Embedding Processes into Existing Operations

Embed sustainability processes across your operation to create lasting change. For instance, if establishing zero-waste manufacturing processes is a goal, prioritize this across procurement, production, and disposal, with standardized organization-wide processes.

Establish programs to recognize and reward teams or individuals who excel in following sustainability practices. It helps develop a collective sustainability mindset and motivates others.

Incorporate sustainability metrics into performance reviews and KPIs to measure and encourage progress.

Increase Participation with Challenges and Green Teams

Sustainability challenges can be a fun and collaborative way to encourage employees to adopt eco-friendly habits. For example, you could hold a "Zero Waste Week" where teams compete for the greatest waste reduction.

Forming an ongoing Green Team also increases participation. Identify your sustainability champions – those most dedicated to implementing sustainable practices within your company. Empower them with initiatives, from office recycling programs to community clean-up events.

Tracking, Measuring, and Improving Progress Toward Your Sustainability Goals

Effective Tools for Tracking Sustainability Progress

When executing your sustainability initiatives, you need a comprehensive monitoring process to track, analyze, and optimize your progress.

1

Track

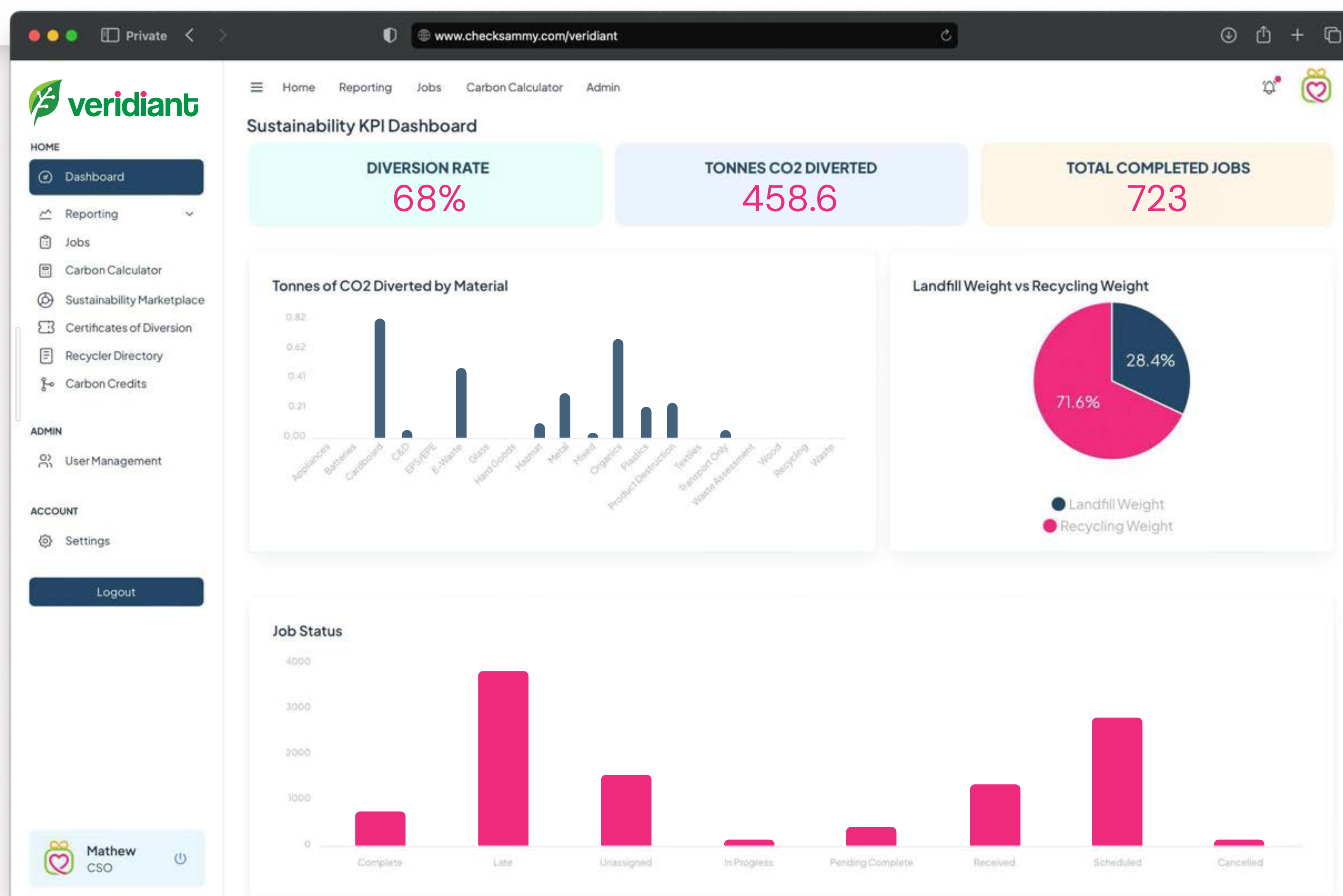
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Analyze

3

Optimize

Maximizing landfill diversion and improving your ESG scores requires the right tools. Choose a provider with a relentless focus on sustainability data. They should offer a platform that provides comprehensive data and metrics, including end-to-end diversion statistics, with verified, auditable data that tracks your materials from pickup to final disposition.



Tools that give you a dashboard with graphs and charts make it easy to spot patterns and trends. You can dive deep into your data, filtering your diversion statistics by factors such as material type, weight, and geographic region. This allows you to quickly pinpoint high-impact areas of progress and identify opportunities to improve specific programs or goals.

Ensuring Compliance with **Climate Regulations**

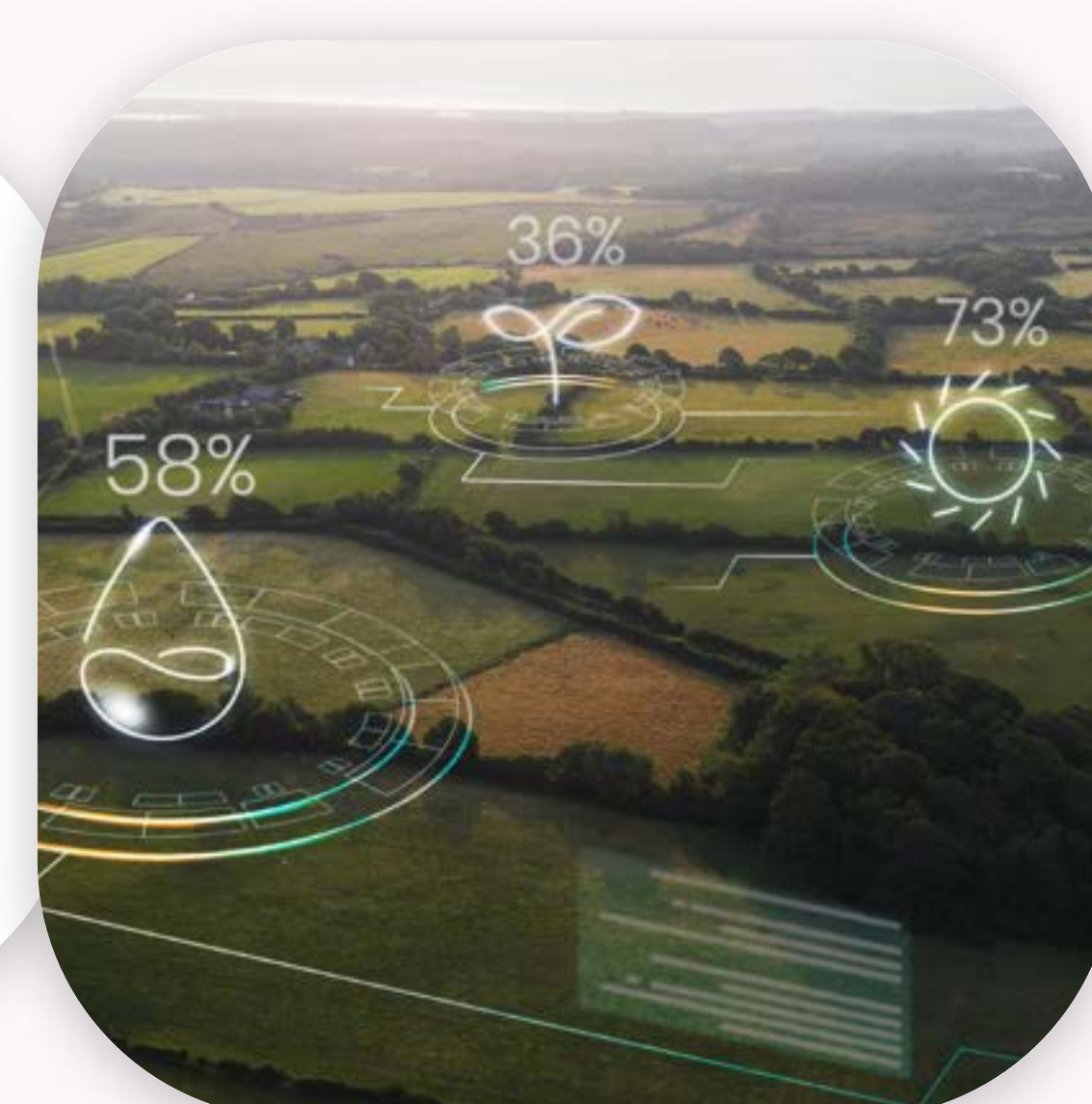
Optimizing your diversion metrics to meet internal goals is important, but you must also plan for climate-related regulatory requirements. They are increasingly coming into play, led by California's SB-253 Climate Corporate Data Accountability Act, and the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), with additional legislative proposals on the horizon.



Now is the time to build your emissions reporting framework and begin planning for the data you'll likely need to report on your carbon footprint and greenhouse gas (GHG) numbers, and all Scope 3 emissions.



Aside from preparing to meet relevant regulatory requirements, there are benefits to getting your data tracking and reporting systems in place now. Every effort you undertake with your waste materials to source separate and verify that it's sustainably removed can offer positive carbon savings.



For example, if you recycle two tons of cardboard, what is the carbon profile of that action? Your sustainability software should tell you. And if you're currently purchasing carbon offsets, the positive impact of your diversion efforts can reduce the number you need to buy.



Building a Lasting Impact

In the end, sustainability is more than meeting targets. It's about creating a lasting positive impact on your business, your community, and the environment. By aligning your sustainability goals with your business strategy, engaging stakeholders, and building effective tracking and reporting systems, you will have what you need to drive meaningful change.

About checksammy

CheckSammy is the world's largest bulk waste and sustainability operator powered by a network of over 5,000 vendors and more than 25,000 recycling and reverse logistics facilities.

We maximize material diversion away from landfills while minimizing the distance traveled from source to destination. Our services are backed by detailed data and analytics via Veridiant, our sustainability platform.

Our nationwide, on-demand services dramatically improve your ability to manage your facility effectively, sustainably, and flexibly.

Learn more about taking the next step to transform your **sustainability initiatives.**

www.checksammy.com