

A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK SETTING UP YOUR SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING PLAN



INTRODUCTION

Decades of scientific evidence have underlined the need for a sustainability transition, and most companies have now incorporated that goal in their strategies. For instance, +11 000 companies have set a [science-based target](#) to reach net zero by 2050. But there is an angle that is often overlooked: setting up a sustainability training plan to accompany that transition. Commitments and policies alone are insufficient. Achieving strong sustainability commitments often requires an in-depth business transformation that includes an appropriate sustainability training program.

Training is not a “nice to have” – it is way of ensuring you can deliver on your sustainability goals. Without it, companies risk reputational damage and having employees who feel disconnected from the organisation’s sustainability goals.

When designing an effective training program, there are pitfalls to avoid. For instance, the study [Improving environmental awareness training in business](#) highlights that it is important that organisations evaluate the efficiency of their training investment to ensure meaningful outcomes. Through a case study on environmental management education within two electricity companies, the findings indicate that the training performed did not sufficiently increase employee awareness of the company’s environmental impacts. And this despite a hefty investment in time and financial terms in a one-off environmental awareness training program.

This handbook aims to equip our readers with valuable insights and practical tools for developing tailored sustainability training plans efficiently and effectively. Drawing on our experience — formalised in 2022 through the launch of our “Sustainability Academy @AM” — we found that being strategic and thoughtful about our sustainability education paid significant dividends, and our approach has been recognized by a Brandon Hall Gold award.

This handbook presents the business rationale for sustainability training, outlines the key steps for establishing an effective program and highlights useful sustainability training resources. It is part of BNP Paribas Asset Management’s ongoing commitment to fostering sustainability education, and we hope you find it useful.



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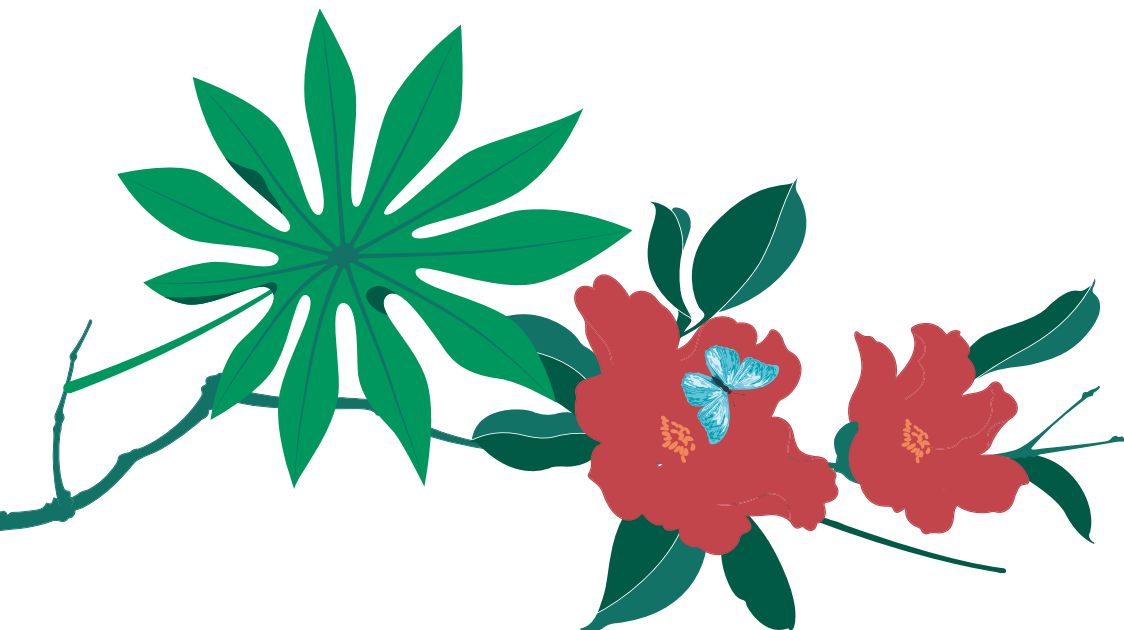
**The sustainable
investor for a
changing world**

BNP PARIBAS

BNP Paribas, our parent company, has made sustainable finance a central focus of its strategic plan, aiming to unite all divisions of the banking group in addressing sustainability challenges. To support this goal, BNP Paribas launched the Sustainability Academy, an enterprise-wide initiative designed to facilitate collaboration on sustainability-focused training and to provide a unified learning offering for all employees globally. The Sustainability Academy @AM is an integral component of this broader effort.

OUTLINE

- 1. Sustainability training, the secret tool to achieve a sustainability strategy**
- 2. How to set up a strong sustainability training plan**
- 3. Useful sustainability training resources**



SECTION 1: SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING, THE SECRET TOOL TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING?

Sustainability training aims to give an understanding of what sustainability is, what are the overall issues, how it impacts humans and organisations and what a company can do to tackle the challenge.



At BNP Paribas Asset Management we aim to train our employees on:

- **Sustainability systemic issues:** climate change, biodiversity and social issues
- **Sustainable investing:** tools and methodologies, products, regulations, megatrends
- **Our approach to sustainability:** the different pillars of our sustainability strategy, our sustainability teams, processes and methodologies

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Employees play a pivotal role in executing strategic sustainability strategies, yet their contribution remains limited without widespread understanding and engagement. Training equips employees with the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindset to transform sustainability objectives into actionable outcomes. This expertise should extend beyond dedicated sustainability teams and permeate all departments, including sales, operations, risk, research and development, human resources and others.

While training entails an investment, foregoing it may result in greater costs. A modest investment today can help avoid or mitigate reputational damage from greenwashing scandals and build investor trust that a company's sustainability story has substance. The [EY Global Institutional Investor Survey \(2024\)](#) found that 88% of investors are using more ESG information, but 92% worry initiatives could threaten short-term performance while 78% believe companies should make investments that address ESG issues relevant to their business, even if doing so reduces profits in the short term. The only way to resolve that tension is to equip staff to integrate sustainability into day-to-day decisions, ensuring ESG strengthens both short and long-term performance.

Employees are increasingly seeking purpose in their professional roles. According to the Mc Kinsey study [Help your employees find purpose - or watch them leave](#), 89% of respondents said they want purpose in their lives and 70% said that their sense of purpose is largely defined by work. Training can strengthen retention, engagement and employees' sense of purpose by positioning sustainability not as a distant corporate goal, but as a relevant and actionable part of day-to-day responsibilities. For instance, [a case study](#) on a series of environmental education and awareness training programmes at HSBC investigating the possible outcomes of providing nature-based training to employees. The study indicated the sustainability training established trust in and satisfaction with the organisation among employees.

Businesses operating in multiple jurisdictions need employees who can adeptly navigate diverse and often conflicting requirements. Beyond geographic challenges, sustainability itself represents a complex and fast-evolving field with various approaches and specialised terminology such as "ESG", "SRI", "SFDR", "EU Taxonomy", "CSR", "Impact Investing", "exclusion policies" – and the list is growing. While some of this is learned on the job, most of

these concepts require structured training to establish a shared foundation of understanding and promote effective collaboration across teams.

The demand for sustainability training is evident. [A study from CSA Institute for LinkedIn and ADEME](#) found that 68% of employees want to be trained on sustainability transition in their company. This underscores that training is not merely a compliance requirement but also a meaningful opportunity to engage and motivate the workforce.

SECTION 2: HOW TO SET UP A STRONG SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING PLAN

#1 – SPEND SOME TIME TO ASSESS THE NEED

As sustainability is a relatively new topic for most employees, it is crucial to identify what the workforce already knows and where the knowledge gaps lie. This can be accomplished through employee surveys, interviews with staff and management or even knowledge assessments. Survey and interview questions may collect feedback on the relevance of past training and help identify skill gaps by role or business line. These steps assist in tailoring the needs assessment to different types of roles.

Sharing our experience

Prior to developing a new cycle of training, we conducted interviews with a selected group of employees and managers across various business lines (such as sales, investments, and operations) to assess their sustainability knowledge requirements. This process facilitated the identification of priority topics for different employee groups and supported the development of relevant content. Additionally, input from sustainability team members regarding knowledge gaps observed while collaborating with other business lines contributed to refining the assessment of needs.

#2 – MAKE IT ROLE-RELEVANT

While general climate science offers significant value, employee engagement increases when training content is directly aligned with their professional responsibilities. Incorporating relevant examples and case studies within the training enables staff to draw clear connections between global sustainability challenges and their specific job functions. Tailoring content also encourages employees to think creatively about new approaches or more sustainable solutions in their own business lines.

Sharing our experience

We created distinct training paths tailored to each type of department, based on job roles, whether an employee was in investments, sales, legal and compliance, etc, ensuring alignment with their specific needs. Additionally, targeted programmes were created for our board of directors, joint venture partnerships, and new hires. Each pathway is designed to ensure BNPP AM employees have a thorough understanding of sustainability challenges, possess robust knowledge of sustainable investing principles, and comprehend how these are implemented within BNPP AM.

#3 – USE SUCCESSFUL EXISTING RESOURCES AND PARTNER WITH EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

Many sustainability training options exist - in person workshop formats, e-learning modules, certifications, executive education courses - often covering universal themes that don't require customisation. Using high-quality, established resources boosts efficiency, credibility (if the resource is created by a renowned education body), objectivity, attractiveness (offering access to high quality content) and employee engagement, supporting both personal and organisational growth.

Sharing our experience

Utilising trusted educational content has benefited our training programs and helped us cover different areas of our training:

- **Raising awareness and understanding of universal issues:** we implemented Climate Fresque, Biodiversity Fresque and 2Tons workshop for staff. [More information here](#)
- **Sustainable investing:** certifications from CFA, PRI and EFFAS enhance expertise on ESG topics¹. [More information here](#)
- **Sustainable finance:** BNP Paribas offers employee tailored courses through partnerships with top universities such as Cambridge and Imperial College
- Please refer to [Section 3 for more recommendations on sustainability training resources](#)

#4 – BLEND DIFFERENT LEARNING FORMATS

Using a blended approach to training caters to different learning styles and schedules. Options include workshops, online modules, on-the-job activities, in person collaborative sessions, certifications and university courses.

Sharing our experience

We have combined formats in our training paths, such as pairing e-learning with workshops or ESG certifications. University-developed courses are typically offered as optional opportunities since employees often find them appealing without manager encouragement.

¹ An indicative list of ESG certifications that we have been using in BNP Paribas Asset Management: Certification AMF Durable, CFA Certificate in ESG Investing, CFA Certificate in Climate and Investing (CCI), EFFAS Certified ESG Analyst (CESGA), CISL Certificate : Sustainability Essentials for Business, CISL Positive Impact Business Certified Training, Fundamentals of Sustainability Accounting (FSA) Credential SASB, PRI Certificate : Advanced Responsible Investment Analysis, PRI Applied Responsible Investment, PRI ESG in Alternative Investments, PRI Foundations in RI, GARP Sustainability and Climate Risk (SCR®) Certificate. ESG - Environmental, Social and Governance. ESG assessments are based on BNPP AM's proprietary methodology which integrates all 3 aspects of E, S & G".

#5 – PRESENT MULTIPLE OPTIONS AND CLEARLY DEFINE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

While offering a broad selection is valuable, it remains crucial to ensure all employees receive the fundamental information. The priorities should be explicitly communicated so that employees understand what steps are required initially, followed by opportunities for further development if desired.

Sharing our experience

Our sustainability training programs are structured into three distinct stages:

- **The Basics:** These cover core knowledge areas, which existing employees are likely familiar with, but new team members or those seeking a refresher can review as needed.
- **Strongly recommended:** These represent the highest priority trainings, which managers expect their teams to complete. Participation in these modules is closely monitored and subject to follow-up.
- **To go further:** Designed for employees who have completed the recommended modules and wish to deepen their expertise or pursue specialised interests. For instance, investment teams may be encouraged to obtain advanced ESG certifications or take on the role of ESG Champion within the organisation.

#6 – ENGAGE MANAGEMENT

Active involvement and endorsement from senior leaders in training initiatives indicate that sustainability is considered a strategic focus. There should be clarity from top management on what sustainability training can bring in terms of upskilling, recognition and employability of employees.

Sharing our experience

Sustainability trainings were not made mandatory. The aim was for employees to participate because they recognised its relevance to their professional development. And for that we needed management support, we engaged them throughout the process:

- We set up feedback interviews with management to assess employees' training needs and engage them from the start.
- For new training:
 - we presented the training at management committees or townhall meetings;
 - we prepared ready-to-use texts or slides for managers to promote the training to their respective business lines;
 - we invited managers to join workshop sessions and introduce the session's objectives.
- We regularly shared key performance indicators with management, including comparisons with other departments, to create a sense of constructive competition and encourage follow-up.

#7 – MEASURE PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT

It is essential to establish meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) at the outset to assess the effectiveness of training initiatives and pinpoint areas and individuals requiring further engagement. Additionally, monitoring shifts in employee behaviour, process enhancements, and sustainability-related metrics post-training can provide valuable insights. Communicating achievements based on these metrics can bolster motivation and demonstrate that training yields tangible outcomes.

Sharing our experience

We have implemented a comprehensive system for tracking multiple KPIs within our sustainability training programme. These are monitored quarterly or annually, with selected results disclosed in our annual report:

- Percentage of staff participating in the recommended sustainability training for their business line. This KPI serves internal purposes, is calculated at both department and regional levels, and assists in identifying where follow-up actions are necessary.
- Number of ESG certifications completed by employees.
- Number of Sustainability Fresques completed by employees.
- Percentage of employees reporting that they possess the correct level of sustainability related training to perform their role, which helps us understand the impact and outcomes of our training program.

We recognise that measuring impact on things like knowledge acquisition, behavioural change, or increase in sense of purpose, is an area for ongoing development and we aim to explore it further in the future.

#8 – KEEP IT CONTINUOUS

Maintaining up-to-date knowledge in any field requires both regular refreshers and a commitment to continuous learning. Given the rapid evolution within sustainability, it is especially critical to keep information current and seamlessly integrated. This can be achieved through scheduled refresher sessions or by incorporating sustainability updates into ongoing meetings.

Sharing our experience

Regular refreshers: We develop e-learning refresher courses focused on our key priorities. Furthermore, we use workshop formats to reinforce essential concepts delivered during previous training sessions.

Continuous: Our sustainability training recommendations are reviewed and updated regularly. This structured training cycle allows us to deliver consistent updates and refreshers while providing sufficient time for employees to complete the required coursework and offer feedback.

#9 – EMPOWERING CHAMPIONS

Establishing sustainability “champions” within each department is essential for disseminating knowledge, motivating action, and providing sustainability-focused employees greater purpose in their daily roles.

Sharing our experience

In 2019, to support our sustainability transformation plan, we created a network of +140 ESG Champions across our sales and investment divisions. These Champions play a vital role in connecting our investment and sales teams with the Sustainability Centre, our centralized sustainability team. Champions are subject matter experts within their teams, pursue specialised education and have performance objectives related to their responsibilities. They meet monthly and receive ongoing training and briefings to ensure their expertise remains up to date on relevant market developments, our ESG research methodology, exclusion policies and stewardship activities.

SECTION 3: USEFUL SUSTAINABILITY TRAINING RESOURCES

In recent years, a variety of training resources have been created. Here, we present the key materials selected by BNP Paribas Asset Management to support colleague training initiatives, supplementing our internal programmes.

FRESQUES

An innovative approach to sustainability training is the widespread development of sustainability “Fresques” or “Collages” originating in France but that have subsequently been adopted in many countries across the globe. These collaborative workshops gather small groups who try to map out cause-and-effect relationships of a particular sustainability issue. The successful [Fresque du Climat](#) has engaged with more than 2.1 million participants in 168 countries, inspiring more than [50 other Fresques or Collages](#) focusing on biodiversity, circular economy, diversity, ocean, etc.

Sharing our experience

We are particularly focused on the following:



Climate Collage

Explores the causes and consequences of climate change, utilising IPCC reports.



Biodiversity Collage

Frames the concept of biodiversity loss, its causes and consequences, based on IPBES findings.



2Tonnes Workshop

Focuses on actionable solutions – both individual and collective – to achieve net zero by 2050

Please note that many other Fresques are implemented on an ad hoc basis within BNP Paribas Asset Management and more widely across other BNP entities such as on topics like the circular economy, sustainable mobility or diversity.

ESG CERTIFICATIONS

Sustainability certifications are increasingly prevalent; they provide employees with a structured training approach while offering them a credible validation for their skills. The CFA Institute's [Sustainable Investing Certificate](#) has attracted more than 60 000 people since 2019.

Sharing our experience

At BNP Paribas Asset Management, we encourage all client-facing sales staff and investment team members to obtain ESG certifications, having identified a selection of suitable credentials for employees. We are offering a range of ESG Certifications to relevant staff internally:



Signatory of:



[AMF Finance Durable](#)

[PRI Advanced Responsible Investment Analysis](#)

[PRI Applied Responsible Investment](#)

[PRI in Alternative Investments](#)

[FSA level 1](#)

[FSA level 2](#)

[EFFAS Certified ESG Analyst](#)

[CFA Certificate in ESG Investing](#)

[CFA Certificate in Climate and Investing](#)

COURSES DEVELOPED WITH UNIVERSITIES

Many universities offer sustainability courses or dedicated programs, sometimes developed through partnerships with businesses. For example, the [University of Cambridge's Institute for Sustainable Leadership \(CISL\)](#) collaborates with corporate partners to tailor educational offerings.

Sharing our experience

We have drawn upon a certification programme created jointly by BNP Paribas Group and the University of Cambridge's Institute for Sustainable Leadership (CISL). The CISL Positive Impact Business Certified Training is a 7.5-day course, delivered online and in person, over a three-month period and tailored to sustainability and finance. On completion, graduates became Positive Impact Pioneers, a community of internal sustainability experts who develop projects that drive positive impact within the organisation. Notably, members of our Executive Committee, including our CEO, completed a version of this programme designed for executive management, featuring live focus sessions on each pillar of the BNP Paribas sustainability strategy.

COURSE DEVELOPED WITH THE CFA INSTITUTE

Sharing our experience



Since launching our Investment Academy in 2009, we have sought to share expertise with clients. In collaboration with the CFA Institute, the global association of investment professionals, we introduced an online training programme in 2022 to deepen understanding of ESG skills and responsible investing. This initiative builds upon our partnership on the [award-winning "Sustainable Investing Gameshow"](#), developed with the CFA Institute. The ["Sustainable Investing Primer"](#) e-learning module, available to both clients and employees, covers climate change and sustainability, ESG analysis and materiality, various sustainable investing approaches, greenwashing, and methods for evaluating sustainability credentials.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability training is no longer a "nice to have", it is a critical investment in future proofing a company. By embedding sustainability knowledge and values across all levels of the organisation, businesses are better equipped to realise their strategies and commitments, comply with regulations, engage employees, and foster innovation. Using established resources such as Fresque du Climat, university programmes, and professional certifications enhances the effectiveness of learning initiatives. Through comprehensive training plans, leadership engagement, and continuous reinforcement, companies can transform sustainability from an abstract concept into an operational reality.



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VIEWPOINT



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