Integrating Sustainability in Social Science Grant Proposals:

A Practical Toolbox

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Toolbox for Sustainability in Research Grants

March 2025

Publisher
Sustainability Institute at the University of Iceland

This toolbox was prepared for the University of Iceland's School of Social Sciences and with a grant from the University of Iceland's Anniversary Fund. The toolbox was prepared in cooperation with the Research Services of the School of Social Sciences.

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Introduction

Sustainability has become an essential component of research across disciplines, with increasing emphasis on aligning academic work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Competitive funding programs, both domestic and international, are increasingly requiring researchers to integrate sustainability into their proposals. This Toolbox for Sustainability is designed to support researchers in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland (UI) in effectively incorporating sustainability perspectives into their research grant applications.

This toolbox aims to enhance researchers' ability to identify and articulate how their work contributes to sustainability. It provides practical guidance on linking research to sustainability and the SDGs, offering insights into relevant funding programs, best practices, and examples from successful applications. By doing so, the toolbox equips researchers with the tools needed to strengthen their proposals, increasing their chances of securing funding and maximising the societal impact of their research.

The landscape of research funding has evolved, with sustainability considerations now playing a crucial role in many funding calls. Research councils, international funding bodies, and institutions such as Horizon Europe, NordForsk, and the Icelandic Research Fund increasingly prioritise projects that contribute to sustainable development. These funding bodies recognise that addressing global challenges, such as climate change, social inequality, migration, governance, and economic transformation, requires interdisciplinary approaches, where social sciences play a key role.

By aligning their research proposals with sustainability and the SDGs, researchers can address the requirements of the funding calls and increase the likelihood of success, but they can also enhance the relevance of their work and open doors to new funding opportunities and interdisciplinary collaborations. Moreover, research that explicitly connects to sustainability has greater potential for societal impact, making findings more accessible to policymakers, various stakeholders, and the public.

This toolbox is structured to guide researchers through different aspects of integrating sustainability into their research and funding applications. It begins with an introduction to sustainability and the SDGs, placing a focus on sustainability in higher education and in social sciences, providing a foundational understanding of the relevance of sustainability in research. This is followed by a discussion on the advantages of aligning research with the SDGs, highlighting how this connection enhances the significance, accessibility, and impact of research. The toolbox then explores examples of funding programs and their approach to sustainability, outlining key opportunities for researchers and how these programs incorporate sustainability criteria. Additionally, the toolbox presents experiences from researchers who have experience of integrating sustainability into their research proposals, offering practical insights and advice. To further support researchers, a

checklist for identifying and aligning sustainability in research is included, serving as a practical tool for recognising sustainability elements in research proposals. Finally, a section on useful tools and resources provides additional support, including SDG classifiers and glossaries that can aid in grant writing and research alignment.

Sustainability and the University of Iceland

Sustainability has become a key concept in tackling global challenges. It is widely discussed in sustainability reports, education initiatives, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs provide a roadmap for achieving a balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental preservation. But what does sustainability truly entail, and why is it so vital?

Sustainable development, as defined in the 1987 Brundtland Report Our Common Future, is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This vision rests on three interconnected pillars: environmental, social, and economic. These pillars are essential to creating a balanced and resilient society. If one weakens, the framework risks collapse. Early views often prioritised economic growth, sidelining environmental and social concerns. However, growing awareness of the planet's finite resources has revealed that unchecked exploitation disrupts ecosystems, exacerbates climate crises, and threatens biodiversity.

Sustainability, therefore, extends far beyond environmental protection. It encompasses health and well-being, social justice, culture, and economic stability. Achieving sustainability requires a holistic, long-term perspective, one that balances immediate needs with long-term consequences. Nature, as the foundation of sustainability, sets limits on both economic and social systems. At the same time, sustainability integrates fairness, inclusivity, and collaboration to foster systems that support global resilience.

Through its 2021–2026 Strategy (UI26), the University of Iceland embraces sustainability and diversity as guiding principles, empowering students and staff to engage in forward-thinking, solutions-driven efforts to address today's global challenges. This strategy aligns the university's operations, academic goals, and partnerships with the SDGs, fostering a culture of sustainability on campus and beyond. By prioritising sustainable practices, UI aims to serve as a model of sustainable development locally and internationally. This commitment is clearly reflected in the UI's Sustainability reports. The university's aim is not only to achieve continuous improvement but also to set an example in sustainability, contributing to a future where sustainable practices are embedded in everyday life and positive change is both inspired and sustained.

Creating a sustainable future requires a shared vision, resilience, and dedication from all of us. Every person and institution has a role to play. UI joins other universities and organisations around the world in this journey to confront climate change, advance social

justice, and promote inclusive growth. Fostering a sustainable mindset enables collective progress toward a more resilient world for all. As an institution of higher learning, UI is committed to this journey as an active participant in the global community, making meaningful strides toward a sustainable, resilient future for generations to come.

Sustainability in social sciences

Sustainability has long been a central concern within the social sciences, even if the specific term *sustainability* gained prominence only in recent decades. Historically, social scientists have explored themes such as human-nature interaction, resource utilisation, power dynamics, wealth distribution, indigenous relations, and access to quality of life, all of which align closely with contemporary sustainability discourse. The introduction of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 provided a global framework that encapsulates many issues traditionally examined within social sciences, such as poverty reduction, education, gender equality, and strong institutions. This highlights the importance of social dimensions in sustainability.

While environmental and technological solutions are essential, the core challenges of sustainability are deeply rooted in human behaviour, social systems, governance, and cultural values. The way societies organise, distribute resources, make decisions, and interact with the environment determines the success of sustainability efforts. Social sciences play a crucial role in understanding these dynamics, making them essential to addressing sustainability challenges.

In UI's Sustainability Reports various examples of research projects and courses within the School of Social Sciences that address sustainability can be found.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, consist of 17 interconnected objectives, and 169 targets, aimed at addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and climate change. These goals provide a comprehensive framework for building a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous world for all. Coverage of the SDGs in Icelandic can be found at www.heimsmarkmidin.is.

By aligning your research with the SDGs you can demonstrate the societal impact of your research.

On the following pages a summary of each goal can be found, as well as the number of associated targets for each SDG.

End poverty in all its forms everywhere by ensuring social protection systems, access to resources, and resilience against economic shocks.
7 targets

Achieve food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture to eradicate hunger and malnutrition globally.
8 targets

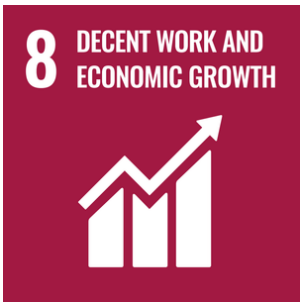
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, focusing on universal health coverage, reduced mortality, and improved healthcare access.
13 targets

Provide inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all to empower individuals and communities.
10 targets

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, addressing discrimination, violence, and unequal opportunities.
9 targets

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, tackling water scarcity and pollution.
8 targets

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy, promoting renewable energy solutions.
5 targets



Promote sustained, inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
12 targets

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
8 targets

Reduce inequality within and among countries by addressing economic disparities and ensuring equal opportunities.
10 targets

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by addressing housing, infrastructure, and urban planning challenges.
10 targets

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns to reduce resource waste and environmental degradation.
11 targets

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing resilience.
5 targets

Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources, addressing pollution, overfishing, and habitat loss.
10 targets

Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification, and halt biodiversity loss.
12 targets

Promote peaceful, inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions.
12 targets

Strengthen global partnerships to support and achieve the goals through cooperation, technology sharing, and financial resources.
19 targets

In summary, the SDGs provide a universal framework for addressing the root causes of global challenges and creating a sustainable future. By integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions, these goals offer a holistic path toward progress and equity for all. Find out more about the research, teaching and learning, and other projects within UI related to the SDGs in UI's Sustainability Reports.

What are the advantages of aligning your research with the SDGs?

Aligning your research with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers several advantages. First, it allows you to identify and articulate the broader significance of your research by linking it to global challenges and shared aspirations. Demonstrating how your research contributes to solving a pressing issue or advancing sustainability enhances its relevance and impact. Second, it improves access to relevant literature and data, as many journals, databases, and research platforms use the SDG framework to classify and organize content. By incorporating SDG-related keywords and indicators, you can efficiently locate the most pertinent research and resources. Finally, aligning with the SDGs helps you communicate your work more effectively to a broader audience. The SDGs are widely recognized by policymakers, practitioners, media, and the public, making it easier to engage stakeholders and increase the visibility of your research. Using SDG language and symbols makes your findings more accessible and increases their resonance with stakeholders who can apply them to real-world challenges.

Examples of funding programmes and their approach to sustainability

Many funding programs now incorporate sustainability as a key component in their application processes. This section will present examples of such funding schemes and demonstrate how sustainability is integrated into their requirements.

Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, running until 2027. The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. A key focus of the programme is tackling climate change, advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and promoting long-term economic and social resilience. In fact, the Horizon Europe strategic plan for 2025-2027 aims to "steer research and innovation funding within and beyond Europe to tackle key global challenges such as: (i) climate change; (ii) pollution; (iii) the loss of biodiversity; (iv) the digital transition; and (v) an ageing population." It seeks to „steers investment into the green and digital transition, building a more resilient, competitive, democratic and inclusive Europe" (European Commission, 2024).

Horizon Europe promotes social innovation as inseparable from technological and other forms of innovation. Firstly, because each form of innovation makes a unique contribution. Secondly, because integrating technological, social, and other forms of innovation ensures that innovation empowers society and supports social change on the path to sustainability.

Horizon Europe offers a wide range of funding opportunities and sustainability is at the core of every initiative, in line with the strategic plan for 2025-2027. Horizon Europe regularly opens calls for funding opportunities with a diverse range of themes, and open

calls can be found on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. Information about Horizon Europe in Icelandic can be found on Ugla, and the Icelandic Centre for Research also offers information about Horizon Europe in Icelandic.

Because of the strong emphasis on sustainability across all Horizon Europe funding opportunities, researchers should clearly articulate the sustainability dimension of their research throughout the project description, including its connection to the SDGs. This is particularly crucial when outlining the project's impact.

Horizon Europe is structured into three pillars with each one targeting different aspects of scientific and technological advancement, allowing for more effective resource allocation, clearer objectives and stronger impact. The following are examples of funding opportunities within Horizon Europe's different pillars that are relevant to researchers of social sciences.

Pillar II - Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness
Pillar II is where most calls relevant to researchers of social sciences are hosted. It consists of six clusters of research and innovation activities, 1) Health, 2) Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society, 3) Civil Security for Society, 4) Digital, Industry and Space, 5) Climate, Energy and Mobility, and 6) Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.

While all clusters regularly open calls that may interest social science researchers, Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity, and Inclusive Society) specifically integrates social sciences and humanities as a cross-cutting issue. This ensures their inclusion not only within the cluster itself but also across all pillars and objectives of Horizon Europe. Net4society lists open calls within Pillar II that are of relevance for social sciences and humanities on their website.

To illustrate how the clusters address **sustainability**, Cluster 2 will be used as an example:

- *Strengthening social and economic resilience and sustainability* is one of the expected impacts of cluster 2, as listed in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan for 2025-2027.* This involves understanding the interconnected effects of technological advancements, global trade shifts, climate change, demographic changes, and migration. As European societies undergo rapid transformations, resilience becomes essential to addressing socio-political challenges while also unlocking opportunities for economic sustainability and innovation.
- Forward-thinking research and policies are needed to support just and inclusive transformations – a cornerstone of sustainability. By supporting projects in these areas, Cluster 2 aims to advance the EU's goals for inclusive growth, resilience, and fair transition towards climate neutrality. All activities funded via Cluster 2 should therefore address these issues and help to promote these goals.

*The other three expected impacts are reinvigorating democratic governance, realising the full potential of cultural heritage, arts, and cultural and creative sectors and boosting inclusive growth and reducing vulnerabilities effectively.

- This emphasis directs the focus of all funding opportunities within Cluster 2 and shows the importance of aligning research proposals and showcasing how they promote sustainability.
- Further information about cluster 2 can be found on their webpage.

European Research Council (ERC)

- As part of Pillar I: Excellent Science, the European Research Council (ERC) aims to support the highest quality research in Europe by providing competitive funding and support for investigator-driven frontier research across all fields, based on scientific excellence. The ERC offers four core grant schemes: Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants, Advanced Grants and Synergy Grants.
- A recent report, *Transformative change for a sustainable future*, draws on over 300 projects funded by the ERC over the last decade, which contribute to understanding the profound transformation societies need to undergo to adapt to and address climate and nature crises. Many of the challenges identified by ERC projects in this portfolio are social, economic, cultural, and political in nature. This is reflected in the large proportion of social sciences and humanities projects, which explore dynamics, causes, and consequences of the just green transition.
- Further information on the ERC funding programme can be found on their webpage.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

- Also part of Pillar I: Excellent Science, MSCA supports doctoral and postdoctoral training.
- All those who receive funding from MSCA are expected to adhere to the MSCA Green Charter, which promotes the sustainable implementation of research activities. Applicants are reminded that sustainability starts at the planning stage and continues throughout the lifetime of a research project, encouraging environmentally and socially responsible research practices
- See more about the Marie Curie funding programme on their webpage.

NordForsk

The Nordic Council of Ministers Vision 2030 is for the Nordic region to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world. To achieve this, three strategic priority areas have been identified 1) a green Nordic region, 2) a competitive Nordic region, and 3) a socially sustainable Nordic region. These priorities are reflected in NordForsk's funding scheme.

NordForsk's funding scheme places no limitations on research areas, themes or topics for potential collaboration, as long as the proposed collaboration aims to support research of the highest international quality and demonstrates clear Nordic added value. However, priority is given to research that supports the Nordic Council of Ministers' Vision 2030 for a green, competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic region.

NordForsk regularly opens calls for funding opportunities with a diverse range of themes, and open calls can be found on the NordForsk website. Although funding applications can be different depending on call topics, sustainability has been integrated into the application form for most calls.

Examples of how NordForsk asks applicants about sustainability in their research project are, for example:

Sustainable Development in the Arctic

- The call focused on sustainable development in the Arctic, making sustainability a key requirement, as outlined in the call description; "As the climate, geopolitics and societies of the Arctic region is changing, it is of utmost importance that the development of the region balances social, economic and environmental sustainability. This is one of the main aims of the call, and the new knowledge and outcomes of the projects should support acceleration of the realisation of key Sustainable Development Goals" (NordForsk, 2024).
- In the application, researchers were asked directly to answer how the research project contributed to sustainability, with the question: *to what degree does the proposed research support relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?*

Sustainable Health and Social Care Systems for Elderly

- The call focused on developing solutions to secure seamless pathways in health and social care, emphasising the active involvement of service users, next of kin and social networks. The aim was to promote health equity and support the well-being of elderly individuals and their families within the context of sustainable health and social care systems. As such, the call supports the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision of a sustainable and integrated Nordic region, as well as its goals of contributing to equitable and secure health and welfare for all.
- In the application, researchers were asked to *describe concisely which three SDGs and their targets are most relevant for the proposal and how the research plan and /or research outcomes support these SDGs.*

Sustainable Futures of Forests, Nordic Research Infrastructure Hubs & Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

- In these three calls, open in spring 2025, the themes are quite different. However, in all three, researchers are asked to *mark 1-5 SDGs which the research project contributes to*. There is no requirement to describe how the project contributes to the selected SDGs, but when describing the impact of the project, there is an opportunity to expand on this and make an explicit connection to sustainability.

The Icelandic Centre for Research

The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís) administers various public competitive funds in the fields of research, innovation, education and culture - many of which are relevant for social science researchers. Although many funds do not directly ask about sustainability in their calls, most require applicants to address the potential impact of their projects. As impact is closely linked to sustainability, this provides an opportunity to highlight how the research contributes to sustainability and supports specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Icelandic Research Fund

The Icelandic Research Fund awards grants in accordance with the general priorities of the Ministerial Committee on Science and Innovation (i. ráðherranefnd um vísindi og nýsköpun), based on a professional assessment of research quality, the competence of the researchers, and their ability to carry out the proposed project. Research projects are funded based on quality, which is evaluated according to their scientific value, the knowledge and expertise of the applicants, and the likelihood that the project will generate meaningful results and benefits.

In autumn 2024, the Science and Innovation Council approved a proposal for an updated vision for science, technological development and innovation, with a renewed emphasis on solutions for societal challenges. Although the full proposal has not yet been published, it is expected that sustainability will receive greater attention in the future, especially in relation to societal challenges.

At present, the Icelandic Research Fund does not include direct questions about sustainability in its application process. However, applicants are asked to outline the expected impact of the project, both within the academic field of study and on society more broadly. This is an opportunity to clearly describe how the project contributes to sustainability, how it aligns with the SDGs, and the potential benefits it can bring to society.

Technology Development Fund

The role of the Technology Development Fund is to support research and development activities, which aim to promote innovation in Icelandic industry. The fund offers a few different types of funding opportunities, and the focus on sustainability differs between calls. Examples of how the Technology Development Fund asks applicants about sustainability in their research project are, for example:

- The call for Hagnýt rannsóknaverkefni does not directly address sustainability, but applications are assessed based on the project's novelty, impact and implementation. When describing the project's impact, it may be beneficial for applicants to highlight connections to sustainability, how the project aligns with relevant SDGs, and the potential benefits it can bring to society.

- The call for Fræ/Þróunarfræ directly addresses sustainability, and in the call text it is stated that it is important that applicants familiarise themselves with the SDGs and their targets. In the application, applicants are asked to indicate how the project will work towards sustainability by selecting 1-2 SDGs and explaining the project's contribution to their progress.

University of Iceland internal research grants

The University of Iceland offers internal research grants through funds such as the UI Research Fund, UI PhD Grants Fund and UI Post-doc Grants Fund.

In 2024, the UI Research Fund introduced a requirement for applicants to specify the potential sustainability impact of their projects, where applicable. The PhD Grants Fund adopted the same requirement in 2025, with the Post-doc Grants Fund set to follow.

When applying for these funds, applicants are asked to describe the scientific value of the project and the current state of knowledge in the field of study, the connection between the research and society, and, if applicable, the potential sustainability impacts.

Experiences of researchers

Various researchers have been successful in applying for funding when implementing sustainability and the SDGs. This is what they had to say.

Brynhildur Davíðsdóttir, Professor of Environment and Natural Resources, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Life- and Environmental Sciences

The research I conduct in all cases contains sustainability elements both in terms of the research itself as well as in the representation of value and impact. As a result, sustainability is at the heart of my grant applications. Various grants received have focused on sustainability including: i) measuring sustainability such as through designing and implementing sustainability indicators in diverse contexts; ii) revealing sustainable consumption corridors in Iceland and, iii) modelling sustainable development of energy systems.

When incorporating sustainability into research proposals, it is useful to:

- Realise that sustainability contains multiple dimensions/themes, and be clear on which sustainability dimensions/themes are represented in the proposal.
- Apply an interdisciplinary perspective and include multi-disciplinary teams of researchers to capture multiple themes and to enable the use of diverse research methods.
- Ensure that the sustainability perspective cannot be seen as an afterthought or as an add-on in the project proposal, but as a clear centerpiece of the research.

When incorporating sustainability into research value or impact, it is useful to:

- Rely on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and illustrate how the research can contribute to the attainment of applicable goals and targets.
- Take a broad perspective and think out of the box as research can have indirect social or economic impact. For example, research that focuses on mitigating GHG emissions may have indirect but positive economic and social implications.
- Not to overstate the positive sustainability implications but acknowledge both synergies and trade-offs between your research output and the various sustainability themes.

Lára Jóhannsdóttir, Professor of Environment and Natural Resources, Faculty of Business Administration

When I apply for funding from companies or institutions, I follow these (mental) guidelines:

Carefully review information about the relevant fund. Examples include the VOR Fund of Reykjavik Energy, the Energy Research Fund of Landsvirkjun, Pálmi Jónasson Nature conservation fund, Rio Tinto Iceland, and interest organisations such as the Iceland Chamber of Commerce. The depth of analysis for each aspect depends on the nature and scale of the application.

- What are the strategic goals of the fund, company, or institution?
- What are the allocation rules and criteria?
- What are the fund's priority objectives? If the fund, company, or institution emphasises the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which specific goals are prioritised (if any).
- How does the project relate to the company's/fund's operations and its sustainability focus? How are these aspects connected?
    - Ensure that this connection is clearly stated in the project description.
    - Justify how the project aligns with the company's field and strategic priorities, if applicable.
- Provide a clear timeline and a budget plan.
- Specify the participants and collaborators in the project, or outline the support available if it is a master's or doctoral project.
- Define the expected outcomes of the project and identify who will benefit from them. Practical value is more important than theoretical significance for these funds, but both should be addressed if relevant.
- Point out how or where expected results will be published.
    - When an outcome(s) has been published, send a copy or a link to the publication, either separately if a report is not required, or included in the progress or final report.
    - Include in the acknowledgment of your publication who supported the project financially.
- If a report submission is required, ensure it is delivered on time. This facilitates future funding applications for new ideas.

Þorgerður Jennýjardóttir Einarsdóttir, Professor, Faculty of Political Science

Sustainability aspects can be relevant differently in research projects and applications depending on whether sustainability is a core concept or an aspect bringing added value. In the CENTRINNO project, sustainability and circular economy was a core aspect, aiming at regenerative sustainability and transformation of industrial historic sites into innovative sustainable economy that meets ecological challenges of our time. My role was to integrate gender and diversity into a work package on textiles, which aligns well with sustainability and the SDGs. The gendered dimensions in textiles can be traced back to the industrialisation and the replacement of domestic crafts by manufacturing industries, followed by an undervaluation of women's contribution. This relates to the climate pressure of textiles today and the highly gendered nature of the textile industry. Women are in majority of those working in textile production, often in harmful working conditions. Women are also more likely to be consumers of textiles and more responsible for family purchases. The impact of the project must be framed in a long-term perspective. To work for sustainability and circular economy, better efficiency and less waste, knowledge must be produced about these processes, and education and training carried out. Many actors at many levels need to take responsibility, and we need to ask what companies, suppliers, purchasing managers, designers, manufacturers and individuals can do. For that, robust knowledge is needed, international and national laws and regulations, and not least, addressing collective norms and mindsets.

Checklist – How to identify and align sustainability in your research?

Understanding how your research connects to sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is key to maximising its societal impact. This checklist will help you reflect on the sustainability aspects of your work by guiding you through essential questions: How does your research relate to sustainability and the SDGs? What considerations can strengthen this connection? How can you effectively communicate its societal impact? By addressing these points, you can better align your research with the SDGs and highlight its broader relevance.

1) Clearly define your objectives,

This will help you determine what you aim to achieve and how your work contributes to sustainability and the SDGs. Ask yourself:

- What questions am I addressing?
- What problems am I solving?
- What impact will my research have?

2) Identify SDG relevance,

Consider how your work supports one or more of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the potential benefits it can bring to society and the environment.

- Can you identify at least one SDG relevant to your research?
  - For example, if your research topic is related to the labour market, you can design the research to measure progress towards SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth.
- Can you perhaps pinpoint a specific SDG target or indicator within that goal?
  - For example, if your research is related to poverty reduction, you can use the SDG 1.1.1 indicator, which measures the proportion of the population living below the poverty line.
- Can you introduce that topic in the context of a broader discipline or societal need (e.g., social inequality, climate change mitigation or adaptation, biodiversity loss)?

3) Strengthen SDG alignment,

Consider how you can highlight the SDG alignment of your research in your research proposal.

- Does your research inadvertently cover SDG-related concepts? If so, how can you highlight these connections for reviewers?
- Are there interconnections between multiple SDG targets and your research questions? Can you create a narrative around these links?
- Does your research address SDGs from multiple SDG pillars (biosphere/environmental, social, economic)? (See Figure 1).
- Are there opportunities to collaborate with researchers from other disciplines to strengthen SDG alignment?

4) Integrate sustainability in research design,

- Make sure to formulate the research questions and objectives in a way that can address how the expected project results will positively, or negatively, affect the SDGs.
- Make sure that the sustainability dimension in the project, and the connection to the SDGs, is clearly described and visible throughout the research proposal, such as in the summary, introduction and impact section. Highlight how the research contributes to progress towards the goals.

Figure 1: The Sustainable Development Goals grouped into biosphere/environmental, societal, and economical goals, where the biosphere is the foundation of economies and societies. Source: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University.

Useful Tools

University College Cork provides a free SDG Toolkit for teaching and research. This mapping tool helps identify direct connections between your research or teaching and specific SDG targets or indicators. It can be especially helpful when preparing grant proposals. The site also offers valuable insights into SDGs and their role in higher education.

The Aurora University Partnership provides a free SDG classifier that allows you to submit the title and abstract of your research. The classifier then evaluates and identifies which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) align best with your research. This can also be used for course descriptions.

Glossary of Terms on UI's Quality Management Page offers translations and definitions of key terms related to the University of Iceland, including many relevant to sustainability.

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