

## Alphabet Soup of Sustainability

One thing you will notice early in your study of sustainability is the vast number of acronyms related to this topic. This handout includes a few key terms and acronyms to be aware of and links to learn more.

This is by no means meant to be a comprehensive list. In fact, the [International Society of Sustainability Professionals](#) has over 250 terms and acronyms in the glossary of its Sustainability Associate credential study guide (I should know – I helped create it and spent many hours studying it!!).

This handout is designed for the novice who is beginning to explore this topic and may not be familiar with the basics. I focus on just a few terms more likely to appear in a business context, which means they will be especially helpful in driving conversations with investors, owners, and managers. More terms will be introduced throughout the course.

If you are already passionate about and study sustainability, you may wish to refer to advanced reading materials listed below.

### Basic terms:

Triple-bottom line, sometimes abbreviated as **TBL** or **3BL** means seeking returns and impact in three arenas: social, environmental, and economic. Also known as the **3Ps** (people, planet, profit), or the **3Es** (equity, ecology, economy).

Sustainability means development today without compromising the ability for future generations to have the same opportunity at development. It is not often abbreviated but you may see *susty* or *sust*. Other terms used to represent sustainability include: environmentally friendly, eco, and green. These all focus on the planet element of triple bottom line, but the concept of sustainability includes caring for communities and ensuring economic viability.

Corporate Responsibility (**CR**), also known as corporate social responsibility (**CSR**), is often used interchangeably with sustainability, although it's not strictly synonymous. CR usually includes philanthropic and charitable work or donations, ethics, diversity and inclusion, and other topics that may not be included in the sustainability conversation.

### Global Frameworks and Standards:

**SDGs** are the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), which are 17 categories of sustainable impact recommended by the United Nations (**UN**). Increasingly, companies are aligning their sustainability and CR initiatives with the SDGs so that outcomes are better recognized by governments, NGOs, financial markets, competitors, vendors, and customers.

**CDP** is the [Carbon Disclosure Project](#), which is an organization that provides guidance on measuring and management environmental impacts.

**ISO standards:** The International Standards Organization has created several process certifications related to social and environmental responsibility, and even some related to specific industries or types

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of processes. For example, [ISO 14001](#) is a family of standards to specific environmental management systems (EMS) and processes; [ISO 26000](#) covers social responsibility; and, [ISO 20121](#) is a standard specific to sustainability in meetings and events.

## Reporting Frameworks:

**ESG** stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance and is an approach to reporting on CR/sustainability. It is an umbrella term for different specific frameworks and methodologies of reporting, such as the following:

**GRI** is the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) which is a set of standards for reporting on CR. It is used by the largest companies in the world, particularly publicly traded companies since some markets now mandate CR reporting.

**SASB**, [Sustainability Accounting Standards Board](#), is an accounting orientation to ESG reporting.

**GRESB** is an ESG reporting framework specific to [real estate](#).

## Daily Reading List:

Here are a few publications/newsletters to read to stay on top of sustainability and CSR:

- [GreenBiz](#)
- [TriplePundit](#)
- [Sustainable Brands](#)
- [The Guardian – Sustainable Business column](#)

## Advanced Reading List:

If you are ready to dive deeper into sustainability, check out the selected resources below. I have personally read these and found them informative and thoughtful works. Links are to Amazon listings for each but you can find them on other platforms.

- [The Business Guide to Sustainability](#)
- [The Age of Responsibility: CSR 2.0 and the New DNA of Business](#)
- [Necessary Revolution](#)
- [Conscious Capitalism](#)
- [Leading from the Emerging Future](#)
- You might also check out a sustainability textbook pertinent to your industry. For hospitality, I recommend: [Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition](#)