



SDG AMBITION



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT SDG AMBITION

Q: What is the SDG Ambition Accelerator programme?

A: SDG Ambition is an Accelerator programme that aims to challenge and support participating companies of the UN Global Compact to set ambitious corporate targets aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and accelerate integration into core business and performance management. SDG Ambition enables companies to move beyond incremental progress and step-up transformative change — unlocking business value, building business resilience, and enabling long-term growth. It was launched in January 2020 at the World Economic Forum in Davos by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. Subsequently, 10 SDG Ambition Benchmarks were launched in June 2020 at the UN Global Compact Leaders' Summit and the first Accelerator was launched in January 2021.

With over 3 rounds of successful programming reaching 1,600 companies in 80+ countries, we are pleased to present the SDG Ambition Accelerator 2023-2024 cohort to be kicked off in October 2023.

Q: What are the SDG Ambition Benchmarks?

A: The [SDG Ambition Benchmarks](#) are a set of absolute, measurable goals grounded in established reporting requirements. They translate the SDGs for business, focusing on where business can drive the greatest impact. These benchmarks are applicable across all industries, and their implementation is adaptable, allowing companies to define goals and targets in the areas that are most material for their industry context. For more information, please review the [SDG Ambition Benchmarks](#).

Q: How do I register to participate in the SDG Ambition Accelerator?

A: Companies can complete the [registration form](#) to sign up to participate in the accelerator by Friday, 30 September 2023. Please note that companies must be members of the Local Network to take part.

See [Eligibility Criteria](#) below for more information.

Q: What additional resources can I access to learn more about the program and SDG Ambition as a whole?

A: The following documents below will provide additional context & guidelines for the SDG Ambition programme & accelerator as whole:

- [Ambition Guide: Setting Goals for the Decade of Action](#) establishes the initial set of SDG Ambition Benchmarks that challenge organizations to set more ambitious goals and targets in the areas in which business is positioned to have a substantial impact. Business leaders can use this document to support their strategy and set goals ambitious enough to deliver the SDGs by 2030.
- [Integration Guide: Designing Business Systems for the SDGs](#) presents the approach through which the 10 SDG Ambition Benchmarks can be integrated into core business processes and systems to enable effective measurement and management of sustainability performance. Business leaders can use this publication to identify the system opportunities to integrate the SDGs into core business processes.
- [SDG Ambition Benchmark Reference Sheets](#) provide illustrative details regarding the steps to integrate each of these Benchmarks into a company's business systems, as well as the key design decisions required to engage technology partners.

ABOUT THE SDG AMBITION ACCELERATOR

Q: My company already has targets in place to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Why should we join the accelerator?

A: The Accelerator aims to challenge companies to take ambitious action, assess whether their goals are set with the right level of ambition to make progress on the SDGs, and support companies to embed the right goals within their core business strategy while potentially exploring new areas of interest. In addition to uncovering strategies to fast-track progress toward existing targets, companies may be inspired to raise the ambition of their targets to better align with the SDGs and the world's most pressing challenges.

According to the UN Global Compact's [Progress Report](#), 84% of UN Global Compact companies report taking actions to support the global goals. However, there is a critical performance gap between the action business is taking right now and the global and societal needs defined by the Sustainable Development Goals.

For example, only 39% of companies say they have targets they believe are sufficiently ambitious to deliver Agenda 2030, that are science-based and/or align with societal needs. At the same time, companies report that the biggest challenges they face in advancing sustainability is embedding it deeply within their strategies, operations and value chains. In our latest progress report, less than half of participating companies report that they are embedding the SDGs into their core businesses and only 37% designing business models to support them.

Q: What activities does the SDG Ambition Accelerator include?

A: SDG Ambition is a three-month* long, outcome-driven Accelerator that aims to challenge and support companies in setting ambitious corporate targets and accelerating integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into core business management.

It consists of a tailored course with on-demand content, live workshop sessions, and industry deep dives with peers and experts. Participants will leave the accelerator with a better understanding of what it means to set ambitious company goals required to achieve the SDGs, and a plan to achieve them. The workshops are informed by the research and deliverables published as part of the SDG Ambition accelerator and designed by Global Compact Local Networks to recognize and respond to different country contexts. Participants will learn:

- How to strategically prioritize actions that will accelerate your company's contributions to the 2030 Agenda
- How to set targets aligned with absolute benchmarks that today may seem aspirational but are critical to spearhead the transformation of economies and societies
- How to approach sustainability management differently and design new systems integrating the SDGs
- How to build a business case and generate sustainability buy-in from your company

Outcome: At the conclusion of the Accelerator, we expect that participants will have one or more revised or new goals aligned with an SDG Ambition Benchmark on a priority topic, a mapped integration journey that outlines how they will achieve it, and a clear plan of action to implement the SDG Ambition Approach going forward within 6 months of completing the accelerator.

Q: What is the duration of the SDG Ambition Accelerator?

A: On-boarding activities will start in October 2023 and will be available on-demand. The Accelerator will run through April 2024. Global Compact Local Networks will provide a detailed schedule of activities

Q: What is the time commitment?

A: The Accelerator uses the 8-step Ambition framework that will be delivered over the course of three months*. Company participants can expect a mix of on-demand sessions, live workshops and peer-to-peer breakouts, and self-guided activities. On average, participants can expect:

- 3 hours of on-demand content
- 16 hours of facilitated workshops and peer-to-peer breakouts
- 1-2 hours of self-guided activities between sessions.

In total, participants should plan to dedicate around 30 hours to the SDG Ambition accelerator over three months.

Q: What is the outcome of the program?

A: The objective of the SDG Ambition Accelerator is to increase the number of companies setting ambitious goals. At the conclusion of the Accelerator, participants will have:

- One or more revised or new goals aligned with an SDG Ambition Benchmark on a priority topic
- A mapped integration journey & business processes identified to achieve success
- A plan of action & identified internal stakeholders to implement the SDG Ambition Approach
- a developed pitch for goals aligned to the SDG Ambition Benchmark to gain sustainability buy-in

Q: What are the benefits of participating for companies?

A: The SDG Ambition Accelerator enables companies to move beyond incremental progress and step-up transformative change — unlocking business value, building business resilience, and enabling long-term growth.

- **Enhanced alignment with the SDGs:** The program helps companies align their business strategies with the SDGs, providing a framework to integrate sustainability into their core business practices and goals.
- **Improved business performance:** The SDGs represent a significant market opportunity, and companies that align their strategies with the SDGs are likely to perform better financially in the long term. The program can help companies identify new business opportunities, reduce costs, and improve risk management.
- **Access to resources and expertise:** The program provides participating companies with access to expert guidance, peer-to-peer learning opportunities, and networking opportunities with other companies committed to sustainable business practices.
- **Improved innovation:** By prioritizing the SDGs, companies can stimulate innovation and develop new products, services, and business models that meet the needs of a rapidly changing world.
- **Reinforced resilience:** Companies that prioritize sustainability are better equipped to withstand disruptions and adapt to changing market conditions and stay ahead of regulatory changes, which can help them stay competitive over the long term.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Q: Who is eligible to join the SDG Accelerator Program?

The UN Global Compact invites companies everywhere to join SDG Ambition. In order to take part, companies are required to be participating companies of the UN Global Compact and to meet the following criteria:

- Currently engaged with a Global Compact Local Network in your region or willing to join (only for the in-country track)
- Committed to strengthening corporate target setting and action to increase progress on the Sustainable Development Goals
- Willing to appoint two representatives (ideally a technology and sustainability representative from the company) to participate in Accelerator activities and events and an executive-level "Champion" to follow programme developments, provide support and participate in high-level events

Q: Who from our company should participate in the SDG Ambition Accelerator? Are there eligibility criteria that we should be aware of?

A: All participating companies are asked to nominate **two representatives** to actively participate in the Accelerator on behalf of the company and **one executive-level ambassador** to provide support & executive presence. The two representatives will be attending SDG Ambition workshops and coordinating with colleagues across the organization to advance SDG Ambition objectives. In order to derive full value from participation in the Accelerator, each company is strongly encouraged to consider nominating two representatives to engage in the work on the initiative, following the guidance below:

1. One representative responsible for prioritization and goal setting (i.e. from Sustainability/Strategy Depts)
2. One representative responsible for overseeing systems to track and manage performance against organizational goals (Information Technology Dept, M&E etc.)
3. In addition to the SDG Ambition representatives, all participating companies are requested to nominate a top-level "Ambassador" to follow SDG Ambition developments, provide support to the company representatives as needed and attend two executive-level events related to SDG Ambition. The SDG Ambition Ambassador should have a direct line of communication to the CEO (e.g., Member of the C-Suite or Board). The company's CEO may also decide to take on the role of SDG Ambition Ambassador.

Q: I am not sure who to nominate as a second representative responsible for systems integration?

A: This individual should be someone well-versed or capable of compiling a company's technology landscape. They do not need to have deep technical expertise in every system, but ideally understand the major systems the company utilizes, their high-level capabilities, and have an ability to engage deeper experts as required.

Q: Is there an extra cost for my company to participate?

A: A small cost-covering fee may apply. Please contact your Global Compact Local Network for further information.

Q: What is the difference between the local and the global track of the SDG Ambition Accelerator?

In-country track: The in-country track is available in 34 countries, where the program will be run in collaboration with Global Compact Local Networks around the world. This track will be facilitated in the local language and local time zone. It will offer a series of live and on-demand sessions, hands-on support, more interactive workshops, and peer-to-peer networking. Companies will be grouped with participants from their own country. Participants of the in-country track get access to global track sessions and in-country sessions.

Regional Track: Regional tracks will bring together companies from all across regional areas & continents to collaborate on unique opportunities to take ambitious action on the SDGs. Space is limited. Please apply early. Examples of this include Africa, ASEAN, Balkan, Central Asia, Latin America, & Middle East Track.

Global track: The global track will be facilitated in English, and it will offer the same curriculum content as the in-country track delivered through a series of global live and on-demand sessions. This global track will be available in countries where an in-country or regional track is not available. Space is limited. Please apply early.

Q: What countries are offering the in-country track of the accelerator?

A: The in-network track of the accelerator is currently being offered by Global Compact Local Networks in the following countries:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil*
- Bulgaria
- Central America & Dominican Republic
- Chile
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- Finland
- France*
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan*
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Malaysia & Brunei
- Morocco*
- Norway
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Portugal*
- Qatar
- Serbia
- Singapore
- South Africa*
- Switzerland & Liechtenstein*
- Thailand
- UAE
- UK
- Uruguay
- USA
- Uzbekistan*

Q: My company does not currently have corporate targets in place to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Are we required to set a target in order to participate?

A: No. The purpose of the Accelerator is to help companies set and meet ambitious targets to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Companies do not need to have targets in place in order to participate. Through SDG Ambition, we aim to provide participating companies with the research and knowledge needed to confidently set corporate targets aligned with the SDG Ambition Benchmarks and integrate these targets within core business operations.

Q: Is the accelerator relevant for small and medium enterprises?

A: We recognize that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face a different set of challenges when it comes to technology and SDG integration, in particular around the financial resources required to integrate across business systems.

The SDG Ambition guidance should still be applicable as you navigate these discussions. In fact, this is an opportunity for SMEs to use the SDG Ambition approach as a competitive advantage to build a more resilient business while also aligning products with a more socially conscious consumer. There may be opportunities to partner with other organizations to develop solutions that help pull together a view of sustainable performance across the value chain where the costs and benefits can be shared.

We encourage businesses of any size to consider the SDG Ambition guidance in the accelerator and adapt it as your business context requires.

Q: Can non-business UN Global Compact participants join the accelerator?

A: The Accelerator is designed for business participants. Non-business participants with expertise and knowledge relevant to SDG Ambition are encouraged to discuss opportunities to support SDG Ambition with their Global Compact Local Network representative.

Q: My company is not based in a country where there is a participating Global Compact Local Network. How can we take part in the SDG Ambition Accelerator?

A: Companies based in countries with no participating Global Compact Local Network within in-country or regional tracks can sign up for the global track of the accelerator. Please note that companies must be members of the Local Network to take part.

To learn more about how to join a Local Network, please [click here](#).

* Some tracks of the Accelerator will be delivered in six months.