

The Sustainable Hotel

*With practical insights, tools and resources
for you and your team*



Hotel Sustainability Action Plan

284 steps hotels can take NOW to become
a sustainable hotel.

MAp

THE SUSTAINABLE HOTEL

#06

March 2026

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Hotel Sustainability Action Plan
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*For everyone on the journey
to making this Planet a more purposeful
and hospitable place.*

FOREWORD

Pursuing the path to sustainability – together

Welcome to The Sustainable Hotel – and thank you for joining us on the journey to a better future!

We created this *Hotel Sustainability Action Plan* to MAp out the way for hoteliers to develop more sustainable hotels. Sustainable hotels that make a positive impact on People and Planet, while delivering sustainable success for you. Whether you've long been on the path to sustainability or are just starting out, it is intended to empower you and get you going in the right direction.

Before we begin, we'd like to introduce ourselves. We are MAp, a creative-led hotel branding and marketing consultancy. We turn Purpose into performance, creating sustainable hotels and standout brands that do good, look good and sell well. As a Certified B Corporation based in Zurich, we work internationally, MApping out a better future for hotels, People and Planet.

Through our experience, we know that hoteliers such as yourself have the power to create real impact in this world and leave it better off for future generations.

But, we also know that sustainability can be daunting – especially when it comes to hospitality. With so much information out there, where do you start? With such a complex topic, what's the correct route for your hotel? With so much marketing noise, how do you avoid the trap of greenwashing?

With this guide, we set out to make sustainability more than just a buzzword or abstract notion – to make it clear, easy and accessible.

That's why we've filled it with practical guidance and action steps to get you going according to MAp's 4 Ps of Sustainability, so that you are empowered to go from hotelier to sustainable hotelier. By the end, you will be fully equipped to reach the destination of having an impactful, successful and profitable hotel business.

As we embark on this journey together, it's important to always remember that, when it comes to sustainability, you should strive for progress not perfection. Achieving 100% sustainability, while an admirable goal, is simply not realistic and as the needs of our world change, the way we tackle those needs changes, too.

What's most important is that you simply start the journey, and continue to learn, grow and improve along the way.

Once again, thank you for joining us on the journey to impact! Let's build a more hospitable and purposeful Planet – together.

**#onwards
Your MAp team**



VISIT THE SUSTAINABLE HOTEL NOW

P. S.: We'd love to hear from you along the way! Please feel free to share your feedback, insights and comments with us at onwards@MAp-consultancy.com.

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INTRODUCTION



The urgency of addressing sustainability in the hospitality industry cannot be overstated, as its impact on the environment and local communities is significant.

Therefore, in this actionable guide, we help hotels aspiring to make a meaningful impact on sustainability take the concrete steps toward achieving that goal. Rooted in MAp's framework of the 4 Ps of Sustainability – Purpose, People, Planet and Profit – this guide outlines 284 action steps that can revolutionise the way hotels operate, emphasising that the journey towards sustainability doesn't have to be daunting or financially burdensome.

Our guide is built on the principle that every action, no matter how small, contributes to a more sustainable and responsible industry. Notably, we've focused on practical, achievable changes that emphasise common-sense solutions over large-scale, costly overhauls. **Our goal is to make sustainability accessible to all hotels, recognising that each step taken, regardless of size, is a positive stride towards a better future.**

Before delving into the specific action steps aligned with each of the 4 Ps, let's explore the broader concept of sustainability and gain insights into MAp's approach.

By understanding holistic sustainability, hotels can not only adopt effective practices but also contribute to a collective effort that benefits People, Planet and the long-term Profitability of the sector.

Let's embark on a journey towards sustainability that is both pragmatic and purposeful, setting the stage for a new era in responsible hospitality.

UNDERSTANDING

Sustainability

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

While you probably know a decent amount about sustainability, it's okay if you don't know exactly how to define it.

The most-used definition of sustainability dates back to 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published the "Our Common Future" report, better known nowadays as the "Brundtland Report" (Brundtland, 1987).

In this report, sustainable development is defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Etymologically, or looking at the root behind the term sustainability, we discover that it is derived from the term *sustinere*, which in Latin means *to hold* (or maintain, support, endure).

Therefore, sustainability conveys the importance of holding onto / maintaining our resources for generations to come.

"Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

G. H. BRUNDTLAND (1987)

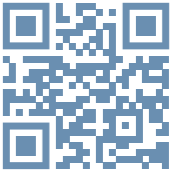
WHAT ARE THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

When addressing sustainability, a good place to start is with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2015, the United Nations created a universal agenda to tackle sustainability through the establishment of the SDGs, later adopted by all UN member states (United Nations, n.d. a).

There are 17 SDGs in total, organised according to key pillars (Social, Environmental, Economic) and covering a broad range of challenges – from diminishing natural resources, to poverty reduction, to environmental degradation and beyond.

To learn more about the SDGs and be inspired to take action, visit the [United Nations website](#).

There you will discover the 17 goals, the respective targets as well as some eye-opening facts outlining why it's important to take action NOW.



VISIT THE UNITED NATIONS WEBSITE



United Nations (n.d. b).



WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE HOTEL?

Even if the term sustainability is clearly defined and, in the past years, quite a few sustainable hotel certifications and cooperations have entered the market, there is no official definition or agreed-upon standard of what a sustainable hotel is. This often leads to confusion, misunderstanding, and unfortunately, greenwashing.

Throughout our journey together, we will highlight the most common misconceptions and serve you with definitions and explanations as it relates to sustainable hotels. But let's start by laying the basis for what a sustainable hotel is, according to MAP's definition:

"A sustainable hotel is committed to creating a better future for People and Planet by acting in a conscious and responsible way – for the benefit of present and

future generations. It is guided by a clear Purpose and addresses the three core pillars of sustainability: social (People), environmental (Planet) and economic (Profit)."

And how do you recognise a truly sustainable hotel (or other business)? A sustainable hotel will NEVER put Profit above People and Planet. In other words: People and Planet will always be more important than Profit. And it dedicates itself to constantly learning and improving with the aim to increase its impact over the long-term, with clear objectives that are measured on a regular basis.

Thus, sustainable hotels know that sustainability is not a destination, but an ongoing journey.

WHY DO HOTELS NEED TO BE SUSTAINABLE?

The tourism and hospitality industry has a major impact on People and Planet. Not only is it THE People industry, it is also one of the largest industries in the world, employing 1 in 10 People globally (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024).

Furthermore, it is deeply intertwined with local communities and natural environments. Think about the destination in which your hotel sits and the local community that is directly impacted by your hotel (i.e. how your hotel looks, how it acts).

Hotels depend on stable communities and healthy ecosystems because, after all, what else do you have to offer your guests if your destination and its People are in trouble?

Not only this, hoteliers have an imperative to practice sustainability and ethical hotel development. Why? To ensure that, together, we do business and run hotels in such a way that we're able to afford future generations a healthy Planet – making sustainability a moral priority for all.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR YOUR HOTEL?

Yes, sustainability is truly a moral imperative for all. But it's not only good for People and Planet, it's good for business, too. Let us present you with some of the main benefits of having a sustainable hotel:

Gain customer appeal: According to the Sustainable Travel Report by Booking.com (2021), 83% of global travellers think sustainable travel is important and 61% say they want to travel more sustainably. By practicing and sharing your sustainable measures and activities, you attract more customers.

Generate customer loyalty: Running a sustainable hotel shows that you care and think long-term. This aligns with the ideals of (increasingly) more forward-thinking guests, which thereby increases the perceived value of your hotel in their minds. This keeps guests coming back and recommending your sustainable venture to their like-minded friends.

Save costs and realise efficiencies: By adopting sustainable practices, you realise efficiencies and cost savings over the long-term thanks to reduced water and energy consumption, etc. That means sustainability pays off – literally!

Better navigate turbulent times: Sustainable hotels are more prepared for changes and more resilient to challenges posed by such changes and other risks to your market, such as supply chain, physical structure, regulatory, litigation and reputational risks.

Attract investment: Government and private sectors are increasingly investing in businesses that do a greater good for the world. Therefore, sustainable hotels are more marketable when it comes to bringing on investment.

Inspire and benefit stakeholders: In addition to creating value for your guests, sustainable hotels are better able to attract and retain top talent, bring on best-fit partners, increase shareholder value in the long-run, benefit local communities, and more.



SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT A DESTINATION, BUT AN ONGOING JOURNEY.

MAP'S 4 Ps Of Sustainability

MAp has created a holistic sustainable hotel framework to guide your journey to a more sustainable future. Aptly titled the 4 Ps of Sustainability, this framework encompasses the key elements you must address in order to qualify as a sustainable hotel: Purpose, People, Planet, Profit.

Learn a little about each P here (we've got whole handbooks dedicated to achieving success in each one!). In order to simplify and make sustainability more accessible for you, in the following sections we have curated a set of step-by-step action steps for each P, accompanied by exemplary best practices to serve as inspiration.



PURPOSE – YOUR WHY

At the heart of MAp's sustainable hotel framework is Purpose. We look at how Purpose informs what path your sustainability journey takes. In other words, the sustainability initiatives you implement should reflect your Purpose.

In the Purpose handbook, we MAp out what Purpose is and why it matters, and outline how to discover, define, embed and activate your hotel's unique Purpose.

[Discover The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: Purpose HERE.](#)



PEOPLE – SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

We examine the impact your hotel has on People, including your guests, employees, partners and local community members. At the cornerstone of social sustainability is making a positive impact for People, addressing issues that affect People, and uplifting and empowering them.

In the People handbook, we define who your most important stakeholders are and show you how to understand and address their problems, wants and desires in a sustainably-minded way.

[Discover The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: People HERE.](#)



PLANET – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We take a look at the impact your hotel has on the Planet, ensuring that you protect the world's ecosystems and conserve natural resources for the health and wellbeing of all – now and in the future.

In the Planet handbook, we help you to define what your environmental footprint is, and break down the measures your hotel should take in order to reduce its footprint, while realising important efficiencies and cost savings.

[Discover The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: Planet HERE.](#)



PROFIT – ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

We address the impact your hotel has on economic growth, in a way that does not negatively impact the social and environmental aspects of the community, but drives profitability for your hotel and everyone involved.

In the Profit handbook, we introduce you to the concepts and benefits of Purposeful Profits and Triple Bottom Line, and lay out the specific ways in which you can create economic prosperity for your People and your hotel.

[Discover The Sustainable Hotel Handbook: Profit HERE.](#)



ON THE ROAD

To sustainability

Sustainability is a long and winding road, and it's important to start the journey knowing what lies ahead before you get started. That's why we want to manage expectations, share helpful tips, dispel any myths, help you avoid the traps – to make it as smooth a ride as possible.

SUSTAINABILITY IS / IS NOT

Here's what we've learned through MAp's own sustainability journey – and we hope you'll find it helpful in understanding what sustainability really is and is not about.

IT IS...

- **A journey.** We use this term again and again, but 100% sustainability is not a destination you'll ever reach – it's a journey involving constant learning, improving, bettering.
- **A series of small steps.** Continuing on the point above, sustainability involves a series of small steps that create big impact. So don't think it's all about major and expensive overhauls – in fact, it's every little action that helps.
- **A lifestyle.** To make your hotel sustainable, you as the hotelier, have to become more sustainable and lead by example. Words only go so far, but actions and "walking the walk" never go unnoticed. Therefore, it's a must that you make sustainability part of your day-to-day life, prioritise it and take those small steps – and inspire your team to do the same as a leading example.
- **Holistic.** Unlike what most People think, sustainability is not just about "being green." There are four distinct and important elements that need to be addressed in order to call yourself truly sustainable. And yes, we will work through all 4 Ps together in this guide.
- **Good for the world.** This is a no-brainer: by being sustainable you make the world a better place! Need we say more?
- **Equally good for your business.** Now this one you may not know, but in the Profit handbook, you'll discover that sustainable businesses see greater financial gains than unsustainable ones. And there's proof to it (Whelan & Kronthal-Sacco, 2019).

IT IS NOT...

- **Quick fixes and quick wins.** You can't simply eliminate plastic and call your hotel a sustainable hotel. Instead you have to be committed to a long-term journey involving small but constant steps in the right direction.
- **A fad.** With the growing threat of climate change, and younger generations like Millennials and Generation Z increasingly more conscious of their impact, sustainability isn't going anywhere. Luckily!
- **A buzzword and marketing gimmick.** Consumers can see right through marketing bullsh*t, so if you aren't walking the walk when it comes to sustainability, you will lose their trust – and ultimately – their business. To be successful, you must be committed to implementing sustainable measures into your hotel and making it a top priority.
- **Easy.** Sustainability is complex. It involves a lot of conscious thinking. It requires you to take on responsibility. It also implies that right now, some challenges and problems can't be solved. However, we say: it's not easy, but it is definitely worth it.

SUSTAINABILITY STATUS QUO

How sustainable is your hotel?



To embark on a successful sustainability journey, it's important to evaluate your status quo in all areas of sustainability: Where does your hotel stand right now?

To support you with this, we've created The Hotel Sustainability Assessment. This complimentary tool, consisting of 17 questions and requiring just 10 minutes of your time, is designed to offer quick insights into your hotel's sustainability status.

Discover whether your hotel falls under the category of an Ambitious Rookie with a long journey ahead of you, or an Expert Explorer on the pinnacle of achieving sustainability success – and gain immediate ideas on how to enhance your standing.

As you implement the action steps in this guide, you'll be able to track your growth and performance as you accumulate more points to achieve Peak Performer status.

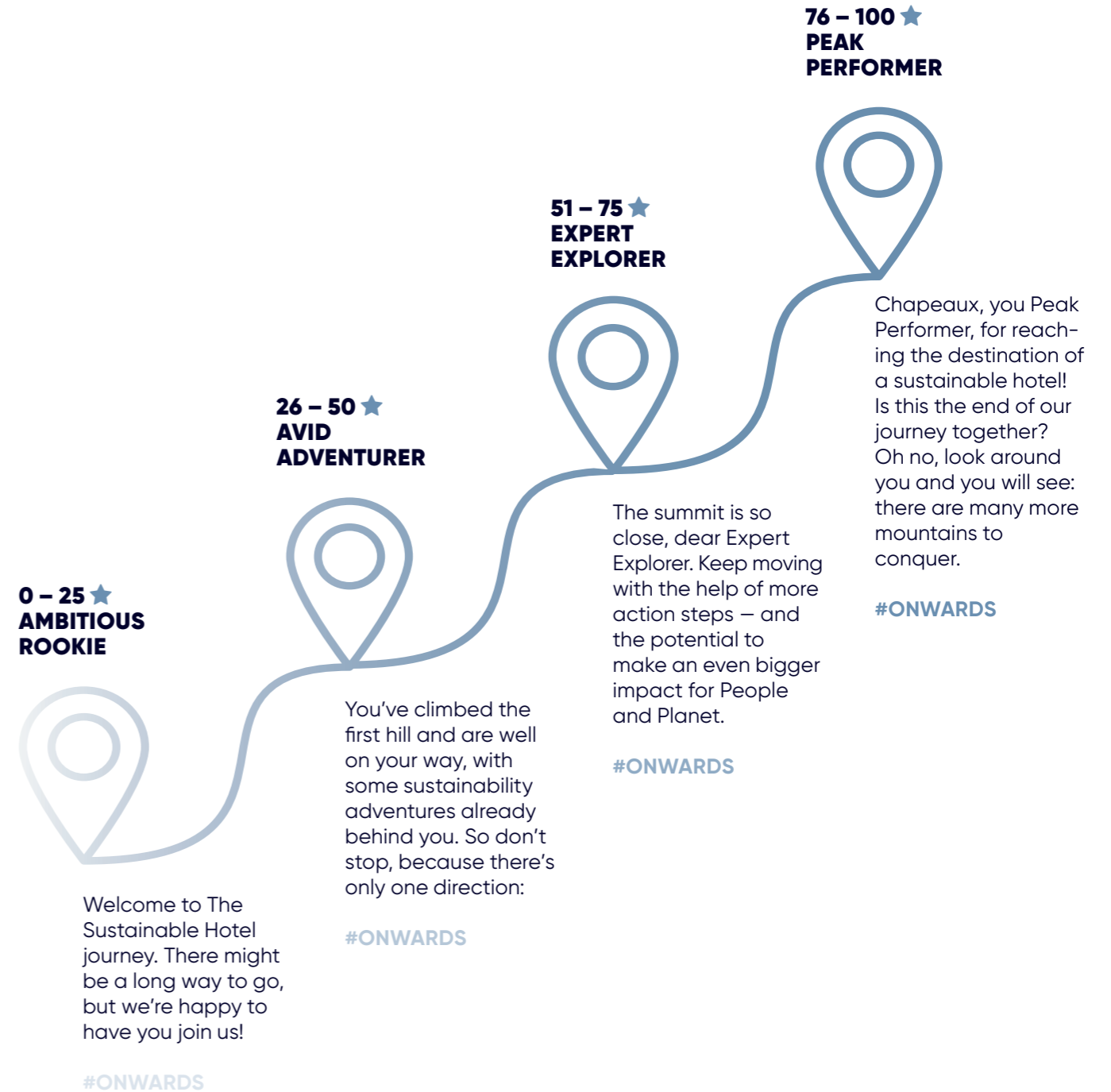
So what's your hotel's sustainability status quo? Find out NOW!

#onwards



ASSESS YOUR STATUS QUO HERE

100 STARS



ARE YOU A PEAK PERFORMER? SEND US AN EMAIL AND WE WILL FEATURE YOU ON THE SUSTAINABLE HOTEL PLATFORM:

onwards@MAp-consultancy.com