



PRACTICAL SUSTAINABILITY GUIDANCE FOR IMPALA MEMBERS

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Overview

IMPALA's voluntary guidance is adapted from advice prepared and shared by AIM, with thanks to [IMPALA's sustainability task force](#), [AIM](#), [Julie's Bicycle](#), [Key Production](#), [Music Declares Emergency](#)

This is intended to be a practical guide for members. Please adapt and use as you see fit.

If you do only one thing - switch to a clean energy supplier.

What you can do now

Make environmental sustainability a priority in your business.

Nominate someone on your team who is responsible for greening your activity.

Put in place an [environmental policy and action plan](#).

For example, you could commit to IMPALA's sector targets: halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, reaching net zero by 2050 (or sooner, if feasible), and measuring and disclosing your emissions annually, in line with the commitments outlined in IMPALA's [sustainability programme](#).

You can refer to our undertaking for individual companies, available both [here](#) and in [annex](#).

You might also want to read IMPALA's Climate charter [here](#). Keep up to date with the latest climate news, initiatives and events by signing up IMPALA's sustainability newsletter [here](#).

See sustainability programmes by [Beggars Group](#), [K7Music](#) and [Ninja Tune](#) and discover how they intend to reach their targets in the coming years.

Get involved in music industry initiatives - Murmur, Music Climate Pact & MDE

[Murmur](#) is a climate investment initiative founded by leaders in climate strategy and the creative industries, which enables the worlds of visual arts and music to play their part in combatting the climate crisis. Overseen by a panel of experts, Murmur's strategic climate fund will direct finance towards the most impactful climate mitigation work they can find. More information [below](#).

[Music Climate Pact](#) is the initiative launched by the UK Association of Independent Music (AIM) and record labels association the BPI, as a response to COP26 and the urgent call for collective action to combat the climate crisis. Find out how to be a supporter [here](#).

[Music Declares Emergency](#) is a group of artists, music industry professionals and organisations that stand together to declare a climate and ecological emergency and call for an immediate governmental response to protect all life on Earth. Sign the declaration [here](#).

Make opportunities for members of your teams to get involved.

Climate literacy training: Tell your team that training is available as part of this programme. Share examples of your sustainability work with the IMPALA membership to map what is already happening in this area and learn from each other.

Carbon accounting: Measure your carbon using the bespoke IMPALA Carbon Calculator, powered by [Julie's Bicycle](#) and supported by [Merlin](#) through the [Weidenmüller Sustainability Fund](#) and [Murmur](#). Find it [here](#) and sign up today! The calculator is free for all IMPALA members and was originally launched through the collective support of our member [contributors](#). See our first [Carbon Report here](#) and submit your footprint to be included in the future reports.

What you can do in the next year and beyond

Carbon accounting:

This allows you to record the carbon footprint of your operations. The benefits of carbon accounting are:

- Creating a baseline from which to reduce your emissions.
- Getting a clear understanding of where your largest impacts are in order to make the most effective reductions.
- Allow you to measure the improvements that you are making as a company and as an industry in a quantitative way that plugs into the science.
- The process encourages different parts of your business to engage with sustainability.

Distribution

Freight:

- Use sea freight rather than air freight to ship to the USA, it takes 3-4 weeks longer but is much cheaper and much lower footprint e.g. [sea-freight shipping agents Woodland, Davies Turner](#)
- Careful planning can help minimise any unnecessary transport e.g., shipping direct to distributors from pressing plants rather than via a distribution centre.

Manufacturing:

Ask your pressing plant (and other suppliers) for their sustainability policy, in particular:

- Are they compliant with ISO14001 (internationally agreed environmental management system). Also ISO50001 (certified energy management system) and ISO9001 (quality management) accreditation.
- What power supply do they use (electricity, gas), do they use renewable energy? Nuclear?
- Do they have waste reduction and recycling targets in place?
- Are they able to support their sustainability claims with data?
- Do they offer product options making use of recycled materials (FSC material for print and packaging, re-granulate PVC for vinyl records, ISCC certified Bio-PVC from the circular economy, etc.)
- Are they responsive and transparent in terms of social and environmental topics? (Transparency being an essential aspect of almost any management system.)

CDs & vinyl - the most important thing is not to press too many copies, overstocks are expensive to make, transport, store and recycle, and of course all this creates an environmental footprint - keep talking to your distribution network to make the best assessment of quantities required.

Local pressings - manufacture in your own country ideally to minimise transport and transatlantic shipping even if it may cost a little more. If manufacturing in Europe the EU's REACH regulation ensures that the pressings made in the EU are made from PVC made using fewer toxic chemicals. When speaking to US manufacturers make sure they are pressing in the US not in Europe - many manufacturing brokers in the USA use pressing plants in Europe. Also ask US pressing plants for the provenance of the vinyl raw material they are using.

Material choice:

Use less material where possible - a 140gram vinyl has a proportionally lower carbon footprint than 180gram with regard to manufacturing and shipping, and almost no loss in audio quality.

Recycled vinyl - 100% recycled vinyl pressings with sound quality comparable to non-recycled coloured vinyl are now available at some plants, and most plants can press on partially recycled vinyl. Generally, these can be produced in black, other specific colours possible depending on availability, or a mix of colours with every copy being different/unique which can be a selling point.

Bio-based PVC compounds - many vinyl plants are now able to offer records made from compound crafted using renewable raw materials to replace the fossil fuel-based sources. Emissions data investigations are ongoing; however, most suppliers of these compounds also claim considerable CO₂e reductions in the creation of these materials. The acoustic and visual quality of these records is identical to more conventional pressings as the chemical makeup of these compounds are identical to standard materials. Records pressed with this material are therefore recyclable in the same way and in the same streams as conventional records pressings.

CD jewel cases (which are made from polystyrene) have a high footprint to manufacture and are not easily recyclable. Card sleeves have 95% lower carbon footprint, and they can look beautiful!

Sleeves should ideally be printed on recycled card or if not certified by Forest Stewardship Council or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) (FSC and PEFC certification ensures that the wood is sourced from sustainably managed forests.)

Avoid mixing materials or using additional processes, which makes it difficult or impossible to recycle sleeves and packaging (including the waste left over from manufacture) for example:

- Use vegetable-based inks and water-based varnishes
- Avoid UV varnishes, laminates or foil finishes
- Avoid CD digipacks consisting of card outer and plastic tray
- Use card fitments to keep box-set contents in place rather than foam fitments

Shrink-wrap footprint is small and recyclable with flexible plastics (in the UK) and using it can reduce returns and resulting additional manufacture & transport footprint, so it's not clear that it is always best to avoid shrink-wrap.

- Consider alternatives such as a more durable PVC dust cover or paper belly band (banderole)
- Or a peelable sticker to seal the sleeve with text e.g.: "This record has not been shrink-wrapped to better protect the planet. Please don't return this record if the sleeve has sustained some damage in transit. The records inside should be perfect!"
- Compostable wraps/envelopes are now available, but check with supplier on their toxicity when biodegrading, and the conditions required to biodegrade. These will require the consumer to dispose of them appropriately so they should be labelled accordingly.

Mail order:

- Ensure packaging materials for mail order are made from recycled card or FSC / PEFC sourced card, not a mix of plastic and card.
- Use paper sticking tape rather than plastic.

- Offer discounts to mail order customers to retain records which sustain damage to the sleeves in transit. (Another part of stopping the culture of returning records if there is a small dink on sleeve.)

A good example of manufacturing engagement:

[Optimal media](#)

- 65% of electricity generated by renewable energy sources
- put in place CO2 calculators for CD and vinyl, providing calculations of personalised footprint to their customers
- avoiding shrink-wrap, CD jewel cases, etc.
- for summary of overall policy, options for customers see [here](#)

See what else Optimal media is doing to make their manufacturing more sustainable here:

[Sustainability: Regional nature protection project | optimal media \(optimal-media.com\)](#)

[Re-Vinyl: 100% Recycling Vinyl Record | optimal media \(optimal-media.com\)](#)

Energy:

Switch to a renewable energy supplier or ask your landlord to switch.

Find out if your suppliers are sourcing renewable energy.

Get an energy efficiency assessment carried out on your building. Explore potential to install solar panels on your office and/or home. Install a battery to make best use of the electricity generated. Replace gas boiler with air source heat pump and mechanical ventilation system. You'll need to get an energy assessment carried out on your premises by a professional.

Travel:

Track your business travel and calculate the carbon emissions.

Develop a green travel plan publicising the public transport options to your office.

Encourage staff to cycle and walk to work where possible, could you offer a cycle purchase discount scheme and cycle safety training? Some cities offer tax incentives for electric bikes, research local schemes.

Set up a staff car sharing scheme if public transport / walking / cycling is not possible.

Company vehicles:

- Reduce use of company cars where possible (especially those that run on fossil fuels)
- Use bicycles, public transport or electric hire cars where possible.
- Avoid purchasing new vehicles particularly those that run on fossil fuels (the manufacture of new vehicles creates significant footprint whether electric or otherwise.)

Staff work flights - reduce unnecessary travel, use video conferencing.

Staff holiday flights - offer staff extra holiday to give them the time to take trains instead of flying for their holidays. Offer subsidies to staff to take trains rather than planes on their holidays.

Digital footprint:

- Emissions from downstream digital distribution (the distribution of digital recordings through Digital Service Providers [DSPs] and consumption by fans through streaming services or digital download) are excluded from the responsibility of labels for the following reasons:
 - Scope of responsibility - labels do not own or control DSPs which are the responsibility of third parties who are already taking responsibility for the relevant emissions.
 - Influence - record companies have no direct control over the distribution of digital files once they have distributed to DSPs, or influence over emission reduction programmes.
 - Size - due to a lack of available data, it's not possible for the recorded sector to estimate with accuracy the size of emissions from digital distribution. The necessary data is controlled by DSPs and their downstream partners. Some DSPs are working towards gathering data from their operations and are establishing emissions calculation methodologies. We refer to this, as availability of data is part of the GHG protocol, but as noted above, scope of responsibility and lack of influence mean that DSP emissions (including subscriber emissions) are not counted as record company emissions. (This is the same as for other downstream areas of activity in the music market, such as physical retail.)
- Digital distribution is a vital part of our industry and makes up a significant portion of income for our members. We're therefore working closely with DSPs to encourage greater transparency and will support towards measuring and reducing the impact of streaming. As part of the Music Climate Pact and our own Climate Charter, we call on DSPs to work collaboratively to share data and knowledge on this issue.
- For servers or server space you use for your own websites - switch to servers that use 100% renewable electricity
- Use appropriate opportunities to ask the digital retailers, distributors, aggregators, services if they have sustainability policies or information about the energy used to run their services, e.g., for:
 - Streaming like Spotify, Apple, YouTube, Bandcamp - or ask your digital distributor for information - note this is to encourage transparency and change across the whole sector. For example, Spotify previously set out its [plans](#) in this regard and has offset all the emissions relating to listeners' streams, which amount to 42% of their GHG emissions. Read more [here](#). Labels should not count emissions of digital streaming services when doing their own calculations, in the same way as they would not count emissions of a physical store.
 - Digital marketing services like Facebook etc.
 - Online business applications (e.g., for accounting, digital marketing)
 - Use [ecosia.org](https://www.ecosia.org), the search engine that plants trees

Banking & pensions:

Moving your money is one of the most effective things you can do. Switch to a greener bank and pension scheme:

- Switch your banking to a bank that doesn't invest in fossil fuels.

- If you can't switch (e.g., these more ethical banks don't offer int'l currency accounts yet), then ask your bank and pension supplier for their sustainability policy and ask them to divest from fossil fuels - every little bit of lobbying helps!
- Switch funds on deposit to a greener bank
- Switch your pension to a sustainable scheme.

Waste management and recycling:

- Aim to reduce the amount of waste you produce by not purchasing single use items
- Set up a paperless office to reduce the amount of paper that is printed for meetings
- Track the amount of printing that you do in the office, use printers that need logging in to retrieve print.
- Carry out a waste audit to see what you are throwing away and see if there is anything you can do to avoid / reduce this
- Ask for waste and recycling information from your waste supplier
- Find out what your local recycling rate is and aim to match it.

Recycling overstocks and returns - most paper sleeves, discs and plastic packaging can be recycled, ensure they are recycled not incinerated. Ask your warehouse / distributors how your overstocks and returns are being dealt with and ask for a Waste Transfer Note for any stock that's been disposed of. [Ecosafe](#) in the UK are a good option for recycling overstocks.

Merchandise:

Ask your supplier for their ethical & environmental policy - these suppliers have been recommended: [Rapanui](#), [No Sweat](#), [Teemill](#)

Mobile Phones:

Replace batteries on mobile phones where possible rather than buying new. Refurbish laptops in rather than buying new. [Fairphone](#) is probably the most sustainable smart phone on the market, you can also check out [the Back Market](#) with refurbished devices.

Communications:

Set up a green team who can focus on key areas and motivate each other.

Get involved in campaigning organisation and/or local environmental groups e.g. [Music Declares Emergency](#), [Climate Action Network \(CAN\)](#), [Extinction Rebellion](#), [Fridays for Future](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Friends of the Earth](#), [Music Climate Pact](#), [Murmur](#), [Julie's Bicycle](#).

Socials - use your social platforms to raise awareness of the climate crisis and related issues. For examples of IMPALA's sustainability actions on social media, follow us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) and [Facebook](#). Get in touch if there's a sustainability project you think we should promote!

5-Point Sustainability Guide:

IMPALA has created an easy 5-Point Sustainability Guide to help record labels to transparently and effectively communicate their sustainability effort.

- 1) **Be transparent and specific**
 - Back up your sustainability claims with measurable actions, e.g. emissions from energy use

2) **Back claims with evidence**

- Claims should be substantiated with credible evidence, e.g. certifications, lifecycle assessments

3) **Share your full sustainability plan**

- Have the full picture in mind, avoid ‘cherry-picking,’ e.g. see IMPALA’s [climate declaration](#)

4) **Be honest - No jargon**

- Communicate using relatable, straightforward language, e.g. specify you have a sustainability officer

5) **Engage and encourage dialogue**

- Be open to feedback, show that you are committed to continuously improving

Education:

Sign up for [carbon literacy](#) training, aiming to raise awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis.

[Climate EQ](#) is offering climate literacy training specifically for the Music Industry - reach out to info@climate-eq.co.uk for more information.

Climate investment:

IMPALA’s primary focus is on helping our sector remove greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions reduction is paramount and should be put before any measures to ‘offset’ or compensate remaining emissions.

However, shifting away from ways of working that pollute the environment will take time. Along the way to net zero, we encourage our industry to take responsibility for the unavoidable greenhouse gasses that we emit now.

There are a number of options open to businesses, summarised in a report published by [Julie’s Bicycle](#). Find IMPALA’s suggestions on climate investment on our [website](#).

As an alternative to carbon offsetting, IMPALA is investigating how it’s members can support projects that have more immediate systemic impact. The model of climate investment involves businesses adopting a ‘carbon price’ and multiplying this price by the quantity of emissions generated, to create a pot of money that can be used to finance projects based on transformative impact. These provides opportunities for businesses to directly fund a whole range of climate mitigation work; from community-based projects to policy advocacy, climate justice campaigns to legal interventions... or even ‘insetting’ schemes which help remove carbon in our own industry. Whilst these projects won’t make emissions disappear, they will help accelerate wider systemic change.

This thinking is aligned with civil society actors such as Murmur, WWF, CDP, New Climate Institute and Carbon Market Watch, which each encourage business to move beyond ‘offsetting’ emissions to ‘financing climate action’.

A great example in the creative sector is [Murmur](#), a UK climate investment initiative founded by leaders in climate strategy and the creative industries, which enables the worlds of visual arts and music to play their part in combatting the climate crisis. Overseen by a panel of experts, Murmur's strategic climate fund directs finance towards the most impactful climate mitigation work they can find. Guided by expert advisory groups, Murmur's shared fund is donated for maximum impact, directing finance towards three key areas, aiming to change the industry, change the conversation, and ultimately, change the world.

Business Case for Sustainability

The results of IMPALA's first qualitative survey for sustainability in the independent music sector highlight the clear business benefits of taking action. Companies reported financial savings, greater innovation, stronger brand appeal, and improved ability to attract artists, fans, and employees. Sustainability was seen as a core part of responsible business, helping labels prepare for future reporting obligations, accessing tax incentives, and influencing industry standards. Collaboration was also viewed as essential to driving sector-wide change and building a more resilient, sustainable music industry. Read the full business case [here](#).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire to send to suppliers - get them thinking about sustainability too!

- do you have an environmental policy or action plan that you can share with us?
 - do you have a key contact we can speak to about sustainability?
 - do you hold any environmental certification or awards?
 - do any of your products hold environmental certifications?
 - is your business powered by renewable electricity? What source?
 - do you have sustainability information from your main suppliers?
 - do any of your suppliers use air freight to deliver to you?
 - can the shipping agents you use provide carbon footprint information for shipments you make for us?
 - do you have any ideas on how to reduce the impacts of your activities that we can work together on?
- (for manufacturing) do you have carbon footprint information per unit produced?
 - (for transport) do you have carbon footprint information per unit shipped?
 - (for financial services) do you hold investments in fossil fuel extraction or distribution?
 - (for digital services) do you have carbon footprint information, and if so, what unit basis are you using to calculate and what areas are you accounting for?

APPENDIX 2

ARTIST SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

ARTIST SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST		
ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Y/N
Planning releases	Using sea freight over air freight to ship to the USA, it takes 3-4 weeks longer but is much cheaper and much lower footprint e.g. sea-freight shipping agents Woodland, Davies Turner.	
CDs & vinyl	The most important thing is not to press too many copies, overstocks are expensive to make, transport, store and recycle, and of course all this creates an environmental footprint.	
Vinyl capacity	As a reference, one vinyl LP can fit approximately 41 minutes.	
Material choice		
Vinyl weight	Use less material where possible - a 140gram vinyl has a proportionally lower carbon footprint than 180gram with regard to manufacturing and shipping, and no loss in audio quality.	
Recycled vinyl	100% recycled vinyl pressings with sound quality comparable to non-recycled coloured vinyl are now available at some plants, and most plants can press on partially recycled vinyl. Generally, these can be produced in black, other specific colours possible depending on availability, or a mix of colours with every copy being different/unique which can be a selling point.	
Bioplastic vinyl	Evolution Music has been developing their new vinyl alternative. With the product now ready for market, get in touch with Evolution to find out more about what we feel could be the future of 'vinyl' records - contact nasser@evolutionmusic.co.uk.	
Vinyl alternatives	Be open to new products coming to the market, which could significantly lower overall vinyl emissions.	
CD jewel cases	(which are made from polystyrene) have a high footprint to manufacture and are not easily recyclable. Card sleeves have 95% lower carbon footprint, and they can look beautiful!	
Sleeves	Sleeves should ideally be printed on recycled card or if not certified by Forest Stewardship Council or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) (FSC and PEFC certification ensures that the wood is sourced from sustainably managed forests.)	

Mixing materials	<p>Avoid mixing materials or using additional processes, which makes it difficult or impossible to recycle sleeves and packaging (including the waste left over from manufacture) for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vegetable-based inks and water-based varnishes • Avoid UV varnishes, laminates or foil finishes • Avoid CD digipacks consisting of card outer and plastic tray • Use card fitments to keep box-set contents in place rather than foam fitments 	
Shrink-wrap	<p>Shrink-wrap footprint is small and using it can reduce returns and resulting additional manufacture & transport footprint, so it's not clear that it is always best to avoid shrink-wrap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider alternatives such as a more durable PVC dust cover or paper belly band (banderole) • Or a peelable sticker to seal the sleeve with text e.g.: "This record has not been shrink-wrapped to better protect the planet. Please don't return this record if the sleeve has sustained some damage in transit. The records inside should be perfect!" • Compostable wraps/envelopes are now available, but check with supplier on their toxicity when biodegrading, and the conditions required to biodegrade. These will require the consumer to dispose of them appropriately so they should be labelled accordingly. 	
Merchandise	Ask your supplier for their ethical & environmental policy - these suppliers have been recommended: Rapanui, No Sweat, Teemill	
Travel	<p>Track your business travel and calculate the carbon emissions, promote train travel whenever possible.</p> <p>Having the data on your travel emissions is key to understanding environmental impacts, identifying opportunities for reductions, setting targets, and assessing the success of changes that you make</p>	
Climate investment	<p>As an alternative to carbon offsetting, IMPALA suggests supporting projects that have more immediate systemic impact. Have a look at IMPALA's climate investment policy here.</p> <p>Great examples of climate investment in the cultural sector are Murmur and Earth Percent.</p>	
Taking action	Think about the following items you could do as an artist (from MDE's pack)	

APPENDIX 3

IMPALA CLIMATE DECLARATION FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES November 2022



As a member of IMPALA, our company supports climate action in the sector and commits to:

- Measure and disclose greenhouse gas emissions on an annual basis
- Halve greenhouse gas emissions from relevant operations (including energy use, business travel, manufacturing and distribution) before 2030
- Achieve net zero emissions before 2050, or sooner if feasible

We'll work towards taking the following concrete steps as soon as possible:

1. Source (and / or generate) renewable electricity for our office(s) and other owned/leased buildings by 2026.
2. Prioritise manufacturers that utilise renewable energy sources.
3. Prioritise suppliers & distributors that have their own environmental policy and environmental targets in place.
4. Enact a sustainable procurement policy that includes a requirement for all paper and card used in physical manufacturing to be 100% FSC certified (+/or a target for recycled content) within the first year of adopting the declaration.
5. Take action to reduce the environmental impact of our business in other areas, such as pension investments.
6. Compensate for emissions that we cannot immediately remove by financing transformative climate change mitigation work.
7. Dedicate at least one day on social media per year to highlight climate and environmental issues, and support artists who are speaking out on these themes and want to reduce their own impact.

APPENDIX 4

MORE INFO ON IMPALA'S PROGRAMME AND CLIMATE CHARTER

Find our full sustainability programme [here](#). This page will be regularly updated, follow it for more sustainability news and documents.

You can also follow us on social media:

[Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#)

Our climate charter is summarised below, and you can also see the full version [here](#).

