

How to write a sustainability course for your community

Introduction to Green Employment Course



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Introduction



The Introduction to Green Employment Course is a grassroots project run by ACH, as part of the Community Climate Action Project coordinated by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership, funded by the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund. ACH is a social enterprise supporting individuals with refugee and migrant backgrounds with integration services. The course aims to share contextual local knowledge on climate change, sustainable development goals, green jobs and skills as well as employability skills to support individuals to integrate into the green sector should they wish to.

We've been actively supporting and connecting our community with opportunities to engage in the green sector, while also shining a light on what green employment looks like here in Bristol. This guide is designed to help you create a course that meaningfully involves refugee and migrant communities in sustainability however it may be adaptable to fit the needs of communities you serve. By raising awareness and building confidence, we can ensure everyone has a chance to be part of a fair and inclusive green transition.



Context



Racial diversity in the environmental sector remains well below the UK workforce average, with only 4.5% of people identifying as people of colour, compared to 16% nationally.

A sustainability course can look like lots of different things and different communities will target approaches to support their engagement. For us, at ACH we found that the refugee and migrant community often live sustainably anyway but may lack the language to evidence this. In our initial research, our tenants contribute 60% less carbon emissions than their Bristolian counterpart.

We identified integration into the sector was key for our community and that individuals need more opportunities to participate but before that more must be done so that they are aware of the sector and its growing opportunities. Here's the guide and structure of our course which you can adapt for your community:



Planning



Understanding barriers to the green sector

Identify the barriers and needs of your community to facilitate better connections when engaging with the green sector.

Partner with a local green organisation

If possible, host the course at a local green organisation. For us, this was St. Werburgh's City Farm. While it doesn't need to be a green space, being connected to nature can benefit your community's engagement with the sector.

Identify barriers

Understand the barriers your community faces when entering the green sector. Common challenges our community faces include:

- Lack of familiarity with sector-specific language and concepts
- Limited awareness of opportunities organisations available to them, lack of relevant UK experience as well as difficult and unattainable employment criteria
- Poor communication within and between organisations providing green sector support
- Unawareness of available jobs and services in the green sector
- A need for employability support to access the sector

Address community needs

Once barriers are identified, tailor your approach to provide resources that familiarise learners with the language and concepts of the sector, offer guidance on job opportunities, and support employability to improve access.

Delivery



Lesson 1: Knowledge building and vocabulary

Introduce core sustainability concepts like 'climate change,' 'sustainability,' 'carbon footprint,' 'net-zero,' 'circular economy,' and the 'green sector.'

We focused on making these terms accessible to learners through engaging activities. One such activity explored carbon footprint and climate change using food, integrating Maths and IT functional skills.



Exercise

Carbon footprint and food miles (25 Minutes)

Materials

- Cereal bar (check for allergens and cultural restrictions)
- Map
- Phone or laptop
- Pen and paper

Steps

- Give each learner a cereal bar and ask them to note three ingredients.
- Have them research where each ingredient is produced.
- Find out how many miles each country that produces that ingredient is from the UK.
- Mark the countries and distances on a map.
- Calculate the miles and explain that these are food miles for the ingredients (this is the "footprint").
- Discuss social and environmental sustainability issues related to the ingredients.
- Explain that all products have a footprint, not just food, due to the energy and resources needed for transport, production, and packaging.

This activity highlights global and local sustainability issues, such as deforestation and child labour linked to cocoa production in places like Ivory Coast.

This activity leads into a discussion about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the collective responsibility for global sustainability and allows for different interpretations of sustainability to arise. You can then talk about local sustainability issues.

Lesson 2: Local trips

Help learners grasp concepts like "conservation" and "habitat" while gaining practical skills for their CV.

Organising local trips to green organisations in conservation or land management provides hands-on learning and supports vocabulary development. Learners also acquire skills that are valuable in the job market.

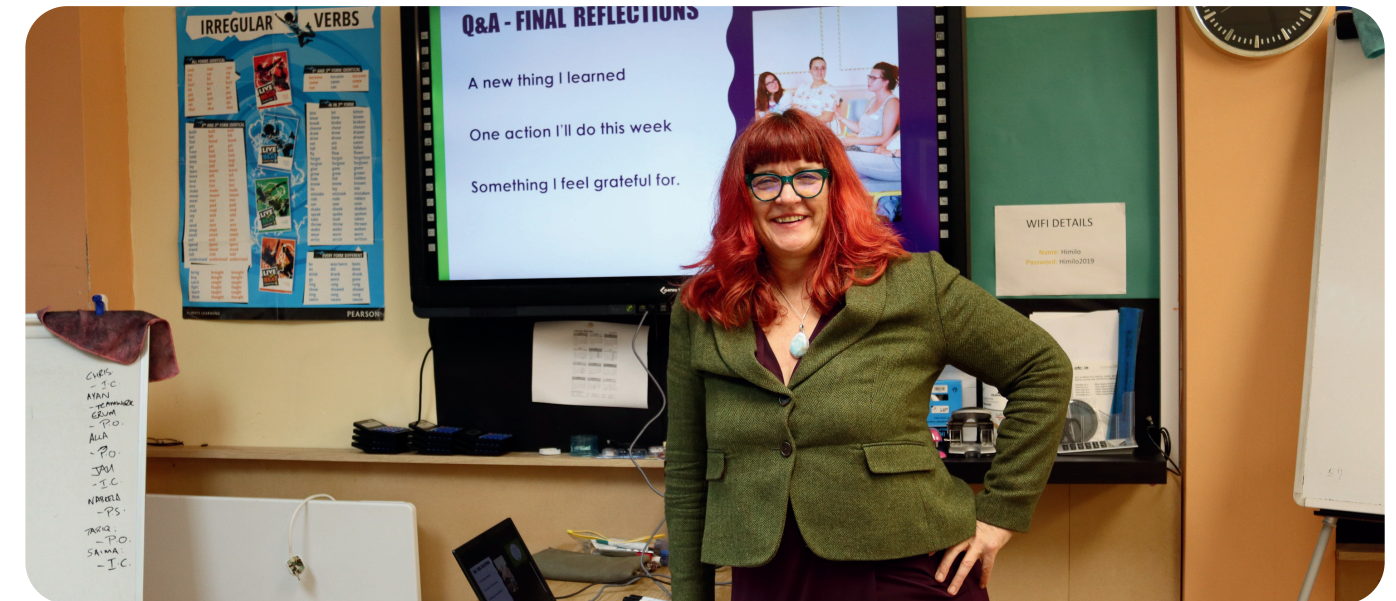
Suggested activities:

- Ash Dieback Management: Teach learners about managing Ash Dieback plans.
- Tree Identification & Biodiversity: Focus on tree identification and its role in biodiversity.
- Social Enterprise Tours: Visit local farms to explore how social enterprises sustain themselves.
- Visit sustainable craft stores learn about waste management and how to better recycle while being creative

These trips connect learners to real-world conservation efforts, encourages new vocabulary learning and provides valuable, practical experience.



Lesson 3: Guest speakers



Inviting guest speakers from a variety of sectors is an effective way to demystify the industry for your learners. This creates a valuable learning experience where students can ask questions in a safe, engaging environment, without needing to travel. We've had success by building a list of employers from diverse sectors, based on feedback from previous cohorts.

Briefing guest speakers

To ensure a successful session, it's important to provide guest speakers with the right context and expectations:

Class Context: Share key information about the learners, including:

- The class's skill level (e.g., English proficiency, education, experience).
- The number of students and any special considerations, such as learners seeking asylum. This helps speakers tailor their discussions around topics like transferable skills or volunteering.

Clarify Expectations: Be clear about what you want the speaker to focus on. Some key points to clarify:

- Do you want them to discuss their specific job, career pathways, sector trends, skills gaps, key terms and training, or day-to-day tasks?
- For us, focusing on career pathways worked well, as many learners are changing careers or starting again from scratch.

Lesson 4: Exploring sustainability sectors and career pathways

Help learners understand the various sustainability sectors and identify roles that align with their interests.

Steps:

- 1. Introduce sustainability sectors:** Start by discussing different sectors within sustainability (e.g., energy, construction, engineering). Explore the roles within each sector to help learners understand the variety of opportunities available.
- 2. Identify personal interests:** By this point in the course, learners should have explored different roles and begun to identify what interests them. This is the time to reflect on how their personal interests align with careers in sustainability.
- 3. Explore transferable skills:** Next, shift focus to transferable skills. Highlight both hard (technical) and soft (interpersonal) skills required for roles in sustainability. Use resources like the National Careers Service or Prospect job profiles for detailed descriptions of required skills and job roles. This can be done as a group or individual activity.
- 4. Research pathways:** Guide learners to explore career pathways and research the qualifications or training needed for their desired roles. The National Careers Service website also offers a guide to help learners find relevant job pathways.
- 5. Share specialist job search sites:** Once learners have a clearer idea of their career direction, provide them with specialist job search and training websites to help them explore opportunities further.

Ask individuals to bring their CV if they have one. If not, provide them with a template they can start populating in the next class!



Lesson 5: CV preparation interview guidance

Help individuals prepare for job searching in the UK, including CV creation, understanding and practising interview questions.

1. Explain UK CV do's and don'ts: Since all CV guidelines are different for each country explain the Do's and Don'ts for UK. Here are a few examples:

- Do not include a photo of yourself,
- Limit to 2 pages in length,
- Be concise and include only the most relevant details.
- Do not include personal details (e.g. address, marital status, children)

Explain the reasoning behind some of this is because anti-discrimination laws and the **Equality Act 2010**, which prevents discrimination based on age, gender, disability, and other characteristics.

Other examples of UK job search culture include:

- Employers typically won't contact applicants before the application deadline.
- Employers often interview several candidates and may take a few days to provide feedback.

2. Introduce key CV concepts and vocabulary: Discuss important terms and concepts related to job applications some might include:

- References: Individuals who can provide information about your work history.
- Cover letters: A letter that accompanies your CV, explaining why you're a good fit for the job.
- Pro-rata: A method for calculating salary or benefits for part-time work.

3. Prepare for interviews: Discuss the different types of interview questions:

- General and background questions (e.g. Tell me about yourself)
- Technical and qualification-based questions (e.g. What skills do you bring to the role?)
- Situational/Behavioural questions (e.g. Describe a time you handled a difficult situation).

Teach the **STAR** method for answering behavioural questions (Situation, Task, Action, Result), and practice responding to sample questions in pairs to support people with feeling confident when answering interview questions related to their career aspirations.



Do's and don'ts



Do's

Ensure you research local green employers and have a list of trusted employers that you can connect people with to support their volunteering or placement goals.

Keep up to date with local changes and adapt this to your course. The green sector is always evolving, it is good to be aware of new opportunities.

Get feedback at the end of every course to ensure that what you are teaching is still relevant for your community.

Don'ts

Force individuals to engage in sectors or work that they don't want to. They might learn more about the sector and realise it is not for them. Knowledge and language are power and that is enough!

Assume that learners understand language, concepts and UK culture. Ensure you provide definitions of key terms and jargon and examples of concepts. Even words like 'green' could be inaccessible when they encompass different meanings.

Don't forget to build joy into your course there is a lot of great work happening in the green sector in Bristol ensure you build that in to provide some hope!

Do's

When engaging with employers, explore their knowledge and experience of hiring refugees and migrants. This can help assess their awareness of inclusive and accessible recruitment practices, as well as their capacity to support English language learners—for example, by allowing time to explain tasks clearly and offering thorough inductions

Make sure that volunteering opportunities have benefits for clients and not just organisations.

Don'ts

Don't be disheartened if individuals don't access paid opportunities at the end of the course! It is a hard sector to break into!

Don't forget to ask for support there are so many organisations that are providing opportunities for participation whether it is a volunteering opportunity, training or placement there are many organisations that are willing to support your learners so don't forget to ask.



The Community Climate Action Project is coordinated by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership and funded by the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund. This 'How to write a sustainability course' was produced by Jah Caballero, Project Officer at ACH as part of this project.

